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MRS. M'LERIE

J. J. BELL

AUTHOR OF

"WEE MACGREEGOR"

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MRS. M'LERIE

MRS. M'LERIE

I

ON THE CRAFT

"IT wis a peety yer man cudna gang wi' ye to Mistress Robison's pairty on Thursday nicht," observed Mrs. M'Lerie to her old friend who had dropped in to enjoy a "dish o' tea" and a chat.

"It *wis* a peety," returned Mrs. Munro, "fur it wis a rale nice pairty, an' we got finnan haddies an' hard-biled eggs to wur suppers, an' ma man 's fair daft fur finnan haddies an' hard-biled eggs. 'Deed, when I seen the dish on the table, I thocht to masel', it wis maybe jist as weel he wisna there, fur I 'm aye a wee thing feart o' bein' affrontit when

he gets finnan eggs an' hard-biled haddies—ach! I mean the ither thing—in comp'ny. He jist losses hissel', as it were, in the enjyement o' the moment, an' although I 've checkit him a dizzen times fur savin' the gravy till the end an' then suppin' it wi' his tea-spune, he aye furgets. I 'm no' settin' up to be high-cless gentry, Mistress M'Lerie, but I dinna think it 's vera nice to haud yer gravy till a' the ither folk has feenished theirs. It 's no' fair to the ither folk. But it 's ma guidman's yin fau't, an' maybe I sudna say onythin' aboot it."

"It 'll never be repeated oot o' ma mooth, Mistress Munro. The vera best o' folk has some failin', an' it 's no' fur you nor me to judge them. An' maybe yer man, if he had been at the pairty, wud ha'e mindit no' to save his gravy."

"I believe ye 're richt, Mistress M'Le-

rie. Hooever, I never tell't him whit we had to wur supper, fur I didna want to disappint him. Ye see, he cudna gang to Mistress Robison's because it wis his ludge meetin', an' he disna like to miss that."

"Whit 's that?" said Mrs. M'Lerie, looking puzzled.

"His ludge meetin'. He 's a Mason, ye ken."

"A mason? Ye mean a plumber. He 's shairly no' changed his trade at his time o' life."

"Tits!" exclaimed the visitor, with a laugh. "He 's a Freemason, Mistress M'Lerie."

"A Freemason, Mistress Munro! Oh, ye 're no' tellin' me yer man 's a Freemason!"

"An' whit fur no? He 's been a Mason since afore we wis mairrit, an' that wisna yesterday."

"Dearie me!" sighed her friend. "I never thocht that o' him. A dacent man like him! Weel, weel, I 'm vexed to hear ye say that. A Freemason!"

"Guidsake, wumman," cried Mrs. Munro, not without indignation in her tone. "An', if ye please, whit 's wrang aboot bein' a Mason?"

"Aw, I best no' say onythin'. Yer burden 's ower heavy wi'oot me makin' it waur. Sirs, the day! A Freemason!" And Mrs. M'Lerie groaned dismally.

"I wud be obleeged if ye wud explain yersel'," said Mrs. Munro, very stiffly.

"Dinna be offendit, Mistress Munro. Maybe I sudna ha'e spoke, but it wis aff ma tongue afore I kent. Ye see—"

"Did ye no' mean it?" demanded the other, whose usually placid countenance was red and angry.

"Ay, I meant it, but I didna mean to vex ye. It 's no' your fau't yer man 's

a Freemason. I 'm no' blamin' you, Mistress Munro, I 'm no' blamin' you."

For a quarter of a minute Mrs. Munro sat speechless with wrath. Then, with a great effort, she said in a strained voice: "I ask ye again to explain yer dark sayin's, Mistress M'Lerie."

Mrs. M'Lerie looked nervously at her old friend. "Weel, ye see," she began, stumblingly, "ma man 's no' haudin' wi' ony o' thae secret societies, an' I 'm no' haudin' wi' them either."

"Secret societies! Ye wud think ye wis talkin' aboot fenians an' nilists an' gun-poother plots an'—an'—"

"Aweel, it 's a' yin," said Mrs. M'Lerie, mildly.

"It 's no' a' yin! Whit dae you an' yer man ken aboot Freemasons? Tell me that!"

"Och, dinna flee up, Mistress Munro, dinna flee up."

"I 'm no' fleein' up, Mistress M'Lerie. I 'm jist askin' ye a question, an' I 'll be greatly obleeged fur yer answer."

"I wisna intendin' fur to insult yer guidman. I only said I wis vexed he wis a Freemason."

"That 's nae answer to ma question. Whit dae you an' yer man ken aboot Freemasons?"

"Whit dae ye ken yersel', Mistress Munro?"

Mrs. Munro looked rather foolish. Recovering her dignity, but not her temper, she said angrily: "It 's jist like yer man, wi' a' his prayer-meetin's an' psawm-singin', to speak ill o' dacent folk. Ay."

Mrs. M'Lerie recoiled as if she had received a slap in the face. "I never said ma man said onythin' ag'in' Freemasons. He 's jist no' haudin' wi' them an'—an' their evil practices."

"Whit? Evil practices!"

"Ay, an' heathenish practices!"

"Oh! . . . Wud ye be pleased to be a little mair expleecit, Mistress M'Lerie," said her visitor, with awful politeness.

"I 'll be nae sic thing!" exclaimed the hostess, thinking that "expleecit" meant something very bad. "But I tell ye this, Mistress Munro, I tell ye this! —I wudna like *ma* man to be ridin' aboot on a nanny-goat in his stockin'-soles! Na, I wudna!"

"Ach, it 's a' a story aboot the goat," returned Mrs. Munro, with a contemptuous laugh. "I 've heard it dizzens o' times, but I never heard tell o' the stockin'-soles afore."

"Weel, ye 're aye learnin'. *I 've* heard tell o' the stockin'-soles. Ay, an' waur nor that!"

"Whaur did ye hear it?"

"Never you mind whaur I heard it."

"I doot whaever tell't ye wis makin' code o' ye, as it were," said Mrs. Munro, smiling disagreeably.

"Jist as ye think, Mistress Munro. But ye canna swear that yer man disna ride on a goat in his stockin'-soles, fur he 's no' alooed to tell ye whit he dis when he gangs to his heathenish meetin's. Did ye ever speir at him whit they dae at the meetin's?"

"It 's nane o' ma business," the other haughtily replied.

"That 's a peety!"

"Whit dae ye mean?"

"I mean that I 'm thinkin' there 's somethin' gey faur wrang wi' meetin's that 's kep' as secret as the kind we 're talkin' aboot. Yer man wud be safer at the prayer-meetin', efter a'."

"Mony a man gangs to baith kin's o' meetin's. Ye 're jist exposin' yer eegnorance, Mistress M'Lerie."

"Ay, an' there 's mony a wolf in sheep's clothin', Mistress Munro, mony a wolf in—"

"If ye 're meanin' ma man—"

"Na, na; I never said a word aboot yer man. Ye 've a rale dacent man, an' a kind man furbye, an' I 'm jist vexed to think he 's got intil sic bad comp'ny. But maybe it 's no' ower late to save him. Ye sud speak to him saft-like, an' try to get him to gi'e up his heathenish practices. Fur, ye see, it disna end wi' ridin' on a goat in yer stockin'-soles. I 've heard o' folks gettin' marks pit on them —*marks,* Mistress Munro!"

"Weel?"

"An' when they 're markit, they can never get awa' frae the heathenish practices, an' their vera souls isna their ain."

"Dae ye mean their stockin'-soles?" inquired Mrs. Munro, affecting flippancy,

though she was beginning to feel genuinely uneasy.

Mrs. M'Lerie wagged her head solemnly. "I mean their inside souls, an' ye ken that weel enough, Mistress Munro. An' they canna get awa' because the ithers a' ken them frae the marks on them."

"But I 've heard tell that it 's a great honor to a Freemason to get a mark, an' he 's rale prood when he gets it," said Mrs. Munro, rather feebly. Terrible thoughts were rising in her mind. Was her husband, she asked herself, a *marked man?*

"Nae doot," Mrs. M'Lerie slowly replied, "nae doot, it 's aye pleesanter to pretend ye 're prood. But I hope yer man hasna ony marks on him. But," she went on after a long breath, "the warst o' it a' is that it 's a secret, an' a man has to hide things frae his wife.

Ay! he 's got to sweer he 'll no' tell his wife, or onybody else, aboot the heathenish cairry-ons at the meetin's. It 's a sad job when a wumman disna ken whit her man 's efter every ither nicht."

"He jist gangs to his ludge yinst a fortnicht," interposed the visitor, miserably.

"Weel, maybe there 's a chance fur him yet, if ye speak to him saft-like. Dinna get up his dander, ye ken, or ye 'll maybe mak' him waur."

But this advice, though kindly meant and mildly offered, was too much for Mrs. Munro. Thoroughly enraged, she rose abruptly from the chair from which she had so often indulged in sympathetic gossip with her old friend, and in a high, quivering voice, exclaimed:

"Ye wud tell me hoo to luk efter ma man, wud ye? My, but ye 've a neck on ye, Mistress M'Lerie! Ye wud tell me

hoo to manage him? Humph! Awa' an' manage yer ain man first. Ha! ha! ha! That 's ma advice to you. Manage yer ain man first—*if ye can!*"

Mrs. M'Lerie shrank into her chair, stung by the last words, for it was only too true that she was wed to a strictly good but domineering husband.

"Ay! Manage him *if ye can!*" cried Mrs. Munro, with bitter satisfaction at the effect of her remark. "An' he 's maybe no' jist as guid as ye think, fur a' that he 's as narra-mindit as a—a—"

"He 's no' narra-mindit!"

"Ach, ye ken better nor that! I suppose ye 've furgot the time when ye wis feart he wud fin' oot ye had been at a bazaur an' bocht a raffle-tucket? Eh?"

"Weel, I tell't ye at the time I sudna ha'e gaed to the bazaur when he wisna haudin' wi' bazaurs an' rattles," said Mrs. M'Lerie, feebly.

"Ay, ye 're a fine yin to manage a

man! Practise whit ye preach, Mistress M'Lerie, practise whit ye preach. I 'll luk efter ma man ma ain wey, thenk ye kindly a' the same, an' I jalouse he 'll get as guid a sate—ay, an' a sate jist as faur furrit—in Hivven as Maister M'Lerie. . . . So I 'll bid ye guid-day, Mistress M'Lerie, no' furgettin' to thenk ye fur yer—yer *impiddence.*" And Mrs. Munro rushed from the room, and from the house, leaving her hostess in a condition of speechless collapse.

Some minutes went past before Mrs. M'Lerie collected her scattered thoughts, and when she did so they might have been likened to so many hard peas, and her mind to a bowl of misery. "Oh me, the day!" she sighed at last. "Whit 's this I 've dune? Cast oot wi' ma auld freen'. . . . And her an' me that pack fur mony an' mony a year. . . . Whit did I say to her? Whit did she say to me? Aw, to think o' twa auld wifes

like her an' me castin' oot! . . . But I 'm shair I done it a' fur the best. I wis sair vexed fur her ha'ein' a Freemason fur a man, an' I wis gey anxious fur her to try an' save him. 'Deed, I wis a' that. But I doot I gaed aboot it the wrang wey. I didna mean to offend her. . . . But it wisna fair o' her speakin' back the wey she did, fur she micht ha'e kent I wis sayin' it a' fur the best, an' she needna ha'e fleed up that quick. . . . Ay, it 's a peety fur her to ha'e a Freemason fur a man, an' it 's no' fur me to judge her, puir buddy." And a tear rolled down the wrinkled cheek.

After this manner did Mrs. M'Lerie moralize till the clock warned her that it was time for her to go out to purchase the kippers which her husband had ordered for his tea.

On her way to the grocer she was

startled to hear a cheerful salutation behind, and a moment later the minister of the church she attended with unfailing regularity was walking by her side. Mrs. M'Lerie had an intense admiration for the minister, and as a rule was quite at ease in his company. But on this occasion, in her distress of mind, she had scarcely a word to say, and could hardly bring herself to smile when he made a joke.

"Shopping for Mr. M'Lerie's tea, I suppose," he remarked, for it was not the first time he had met her on that errand. "I hope you 're going to give him something nice," he added, merely for the sake of speaking, for he began to notice she was ill at ease.

"Ay, he likes Freemasons," stammered the old woman.

"Freemasons!" exclaimed the minister.

"I—I mean kippers, sir," she said, with something like a sob. "He—he 's no' haudin' wi' Freemasons," she added hastily.

"Is he not?" The minister checked a laugh, and spoke gently. It was clear that something serious was troubling the humble member of his congregation. But he forbore to question her, though he was naturally curious as to the reason of her extraordinary remark.

She, however, had not the courage to enlighten him, much as she longed to do so, with a view to gaining comfort and perhaps advice, and they reached the grocer's shop without a word on her side.

"Good-bye, Mrs. M'Lerie, and remember me to your husband," said the minister, and turned away.

She stepped into the shop, stepped out again, and, forgetful of all things

but one, called after the black-coated figure.

He came back at once. "You want me, Mrs. M'Lerie?"

She nodded, unable to speak.

"Come this way, and tell me about it," he said gently, and led her into a quiet street.

And there, incoherently enough, she told her tale, ending with a question, which need not be written down, but to which the minister very gravely, but with something like a twinkle in his eye, replied:

"I hope so, Mrs. M'Lerie. Indeed, I believe so. And you must n't be too hard on the masonic brethren, for—well, I happen to be one of them."

To poor Mrs. M'Lerie it was the shock of the afternoon, but the minister would not allow her to say a word.

"You must n't waste a moment more

on me," he said. "You must think of Mrs. Munro—your old friend."

"Ma auld freen'," sighed Mrs. M'Lerie. "I 'll gang an' see her the noo."

. . . . . .

For the first time in his long period of married life, Mr. M'Lerie that night had to wait for his tea.

II

THE COUNTRY VISIT

"WEEL, ye 've got back," said Mrs. Munro, seating herself at her old friend's table and taking the cup of tea presented to her.

"Ay, I 've got back," returned Mrs. M'Lerie, who had been spending nearly a week with her sister-in-law in the country and whose homely, kindly visage wore an unaccustomed rosiness.

Mrs. Munro poured a portion of her tea into her saucer, and took a mouthful of the almost scalding liquid, making a peculiar sound, doubtless of satisfaction, as it passed her lips.

"Ye 're lukin' rale weel, Mistress M'Lerie," she observed presently.

"I 'm feelin' no' so bad, Mistress Munro; I 'm feelin' no' so bad—*noo,*" the hostess admitted.

Mrs. Munro looked puzzled. "Ye mean ye 're kin' o' gled to be hame again, I suppose," she said.

"Jist that," replied Mrs. M'Lerie, rather shortly.

"Did ye no' enjye yersel'?" exclaimed her friend, in surprise.

"Whiles."

"'Deed, I 'm vexed fur that," said the visitor, with a gaze of sympathy.

"I 'm no' sayin' I didna enjye masel'," said the other, hastily. "Ye mauna think that, Mistress Munro, ye mauna think that!"

"But I doot it wisna a' pleesure," remarked Mrs. Munro, who could not help feeling curious regarding her friend's experiences in the country.

"Maybe no', maybe no'," slowly re-

plied Mrs. M'Lerie. "But is there onythin' in the warld that 's a' pleesure? Tell me that, Mistress Munro!"

Mrs. Munro took a drink of tea before she replied. "I daursay ye 're richt. But I wis hopin' it wud be naethin' but pleesure wi' yer guid-sister in the country."

"I thocht that masel'. But, as ye ken, I gaed to please ma man. Ye see, his sister has askit me fur near twinty year, an' I 've aye said I cudna gang; but this time ma man wis that anxious fur me to gang, an' I jist gaed. . . . Aweel, it 's a' bye noo, an', as ye say, I 'm kin' o' gled to get hame."

"Ay. But whit gaed wrang, that ye didna enjye yersel'?" inquired Mrs. Munro.

"I didna say I didna enjye masel'," was the reply, given with a touch of asperity.

"Weel, ye didna exactly say ye did, did ye?"

"Och, never heed aboot it. It 's a' bye noo."

But Mrs. Munro was not to be put off. "I ken fine ye didna enjye yersel', so ye best tell us a' aboot it."

Mrs. M'Lerie looked uneasy. "Ye—ye 'll no tell ma man I tell't ye?" she said at last.

Mrs. Munro drew herself up, and very solemnly said: "May I dee this vera meenit if I ever open ma mooth!" Then she finished her tea and passed in her cup.

The hostess refilled the cup and handed it back before she replied. "Mind," she began at last, "mind, I 'm no' sayin' onythin' ag'in' ma guid-sister, Mistress M'Corkindale."

Mrs. Munro nodded reassuringly as she stirred her tea.

"Weel, I 'll jist ha'e to tell ye a' aboot it," said Mrs. M'Lerie. "To begin wi', I had a maist awfu' rin fur the train. I thocht it stairtit at twinty-five past twa, but when I got to the station, wi' ma tin boax an' twa-three paircels, it wis jist the time; an' I wis sclimmin' intil a cairriage when a man grups ma airm an' speirt at me whaur I wis gaun. . . . 'Kinbuckie,' says I. . . . 'This is the train for Mulguy,' he says, kin' o' short-like. . . . 'Deed, Mistress Munro, it wis a narra escape! . . . 'Whaur 's the Kinbuckie train?' says I, when he had tooken ma boax an' paircels oot the cairriage an' drappit them on the gr'un' jist as if they wis dirt. . . . 'Number three platform,' says he, 'but ye 've plenty time. It disna stairt till ten meenits afore five.' . . . 'But I want the train that gangs at twinty-five past twa,' says I, kin' o' angry, fur he had pu'ed the

string aff yin o' ma paircels. . . . 'Weel, ye better tak' a sate an' wait till Setterday,' says he. An' wi' that he gaed awa'."

"Aw, I see," said Mrs. Munro, "ye hadna noticed the train wis Setterdays only. Whit a peety!"

"I can tell ye, I wis gey sair pit oot, furbye the impiddence o' the man tellin' me to wait till Setterday when it wis jist Tuesday. But at last I got awa'."

"Is 't a lang journey to Kinbuckie?" inquired Mrs. Munro.

"Near three 'oors, an', as ye ken, I dinna like sittin' in trains. But there wis a dacent auld man in the cairriage, an' he tell't me aboot a' the places on the road, an' tell't me when I wis comin' near Kinbuckie. So I got there safe an' soon', an' no muckle the waur, excep' that I wis unco dry, an' wearyin' fur a dish o' tea."

"Ye wud be that," remarked Mrs. Munro, in tones of sympathy. "An' wis Mistress M'Corkindale waitin' at the station?"

"Na; but her man wis there. He said he guessed I wud come wi' that train, but I think Mistress M'Corkindale micht ha'e let me ken aboot the ither train bein' a Setterday yin."

"Is Maister M'Corkindale a nice man?"

"Mphm! . . . Ay, he 's a nice man, Mistress Munro. Faur be it frae me to say a word ag'in' Maister M'Corkindale. An' he 's weel aff. But he 's awfu' quate. He hardly ever opens his mooth, an' when he dis, it 's jist like a moose squeakin'. . . . But I wis gaun to tell ye whit happened efter I got oot the station. Maister M'Corkindale pit ma boax an' paircels intil yin o' thae machines that 's a' wheels an' nae

sates—jigs, I think they ca' them, an'—"

"It wud be a gig ye mean," Mrs. Munro interrupted.

"Maybe. But I can tell ye it felt liker a jig. 'Deed, ay!" retorted her friend. "I wisna fur gettin' up on the machine at first, and tell't Maister M'Corkindale I wud shinner walk, fur the horse lukit kin' o' wild an' furious. But he said it wis near sax mile to the fairm, an' I needna be feart. Ma certy! if I had kent it wis that length frae the station I wud never ha'e left Glesca! . . . But there wis naethin' else fur it, so efter twa-three attem's I sprauchled up on the machine, an' awa' we gaed. I needna tell ye ma sufferin's, Mistress Munro, but I wis near shooken to bits when I got to the fairm, an' rale thenkfu' to feel the gr'un' ablow ma feet again."

"But yer troubles wud be ower, as it

were, when ye got to the fairm,'' Mrs. Munro observed cheerfully.

''Ye micht think that, Mistress Munro, ye micht think that! I thocht that masel'—*at first.*''

''But whit gaed wrang? Wis Mistress M'Corkindale no' rale kind and pleesant?''

''I never said onythin' ag'in' ma guidsister, Mistress M'Corkindale!''

''I 'm no' sayin' ye did, Mistress M'Lerie. I—I wis merely speirin', so to speak.''

''Ay, ay. . . . Weel, as I wis sayin', I wudna say onythin' ag'in' ma guidsister, Mistress M'Corkindale; but—but—''

''Ye needna be feart sayin' onythin' to an' auld freen' like masel', Mistress M'Lerie. May I dee this vera meenit if I ever—''

''I ken that, Mistress Munro, I ken

that," said Mrs. M'Lerie, gently. "I ken ye wudna repeat onythin' I tell't ye."

"No' if I wis to be tortured on the rack," said Mrs. Munro, who was fond of reading Foxe's "Book of Martyrs."

"I left yin o' ma paircels on the rack," said Mrs. M'Lerie, "but I got it the next day."

"I didna mean that kin' o' rack. I meant the rack fur—fur streechin' folk."

"Oh, ay. . . . Mphm. . . . Aweel, I wis gaun to tell ye aboot whit I got at the fairm, Mistress Munro."

"An' whit wis that?"

"It wis— Mind, I 'm no sayin' onythin' ag'in' ma guid-sister, Mistress M'Corkindale. Mind that! . . . But whit think ye I got fur ma supper?"

"She didna gi'e ye jist a plain tea?"

"Plain tea! My! I wud ha'e been

gled o' that, Mistress Munro, I wud ha'e been gled o' that!"

"Whit did she gi'e ye?"

"A biled egg an' a—a cup o' co-co-a!" cried Mrs. M'Lerie.

"Co-co-a?"

"Ay! neither mair nor less! An' I wis that dry! . . . Aw, Mistress Munro, did ye ever get a big cup o' co-co-a when ye wis wearyin'—ay, jist *wearyin'*—fur a guid cup o' tea?"

"I 'm thenkfu' to be in the poseetion to say I never did!" replied Mrs. Munro, forcibly. "Weel, weel!" she added, and shook her head despairingly.

"That 's whit *I* got," said Mrs. M'Lerie. "Ay, an' that 's the only drink I got a' the time I wis awa'—Co-co-a!"

"Co-co-a!"

"Jist co-co-a! . . . Mistress M'Corkindale said it wis the only drink that wisna entirely deleerious."

"Ye mean deleteerious."

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. But that 's whit she said, onywey. . . . An' co-co-a 's a thing I canna thole!"

"Dearie me! Nae wunner ye didna enjye yersel', Mrs. M'Lerie."

"I never said I didna enjye masel'! An' faur be it frae me to say a word ag'in'—"

"Weel, weel," said Mrs. Munro, soothingly. "I suppose Mistress M'Corkindale an' her man are whit ye micht ca' *converts.*"

"They wisna *diverts,* onywey."

"I mean *converts* to co-co-A," said Mrs. Munro.

"Nae doot!" Mrs. M'Lerie replied. "The twa o' them wis jist daft fur it. I wis wunnerin' if it wis the cocoA that gi'ed Maister M'Corkindale his squeakie v'ice. . . . But I maun say he aye tuk a wee drappie speerits afore he gaed to

his bed. No' that he ever said, 'Here 's t' ye!' Na! But faur be it frae me to—"

"A' the same," interposed Mrs. Munro, "ye wud ha'e a fine healthy life at the fairm."

"Mphm!"

"Ye wud get the mulk warm frae the coos?"

"Ay, but I prefer it cauld i' the can."

Mrs. Munro laughed. Then she said: "An' ye wud get eggs new laid."

"Fresh is guid enough fur me."

"Ay. But it maun be fine to sit doon to yer breakfast, kennen the eggs wis laid that vera mornin'!"

"Maybe. . . . It 's no' vera fine hearin' them bein' laid at three o'clock in the mornin'."

"Tits! Ye cudna hear an egg bein' laid, Mistress M'Lerie!"

"Cud I no'? . . . I tell ye, Mistress

Munro, I heard the beasts cryin' 'Cock-a-leerie-law' every mornin'—ay, even on the Sawbath!"

"Och! That wud be the cocks."

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. Whitever it wis, it begood aboot three i' the mornin', an' I never boot an e'e efter that. Aw, Mistress Munro, it 's a sair job bidin' at a fairm when ye 're no' used to it!"

"But ye wud ha'e some nice walks through the day, Mistress M'Lerie."

Mrs. M'Lerie shook her head.

"Is 't no' a bonny place Kinbuckie?" Mrs. Munro inquired.

"I never said it wisna bonny."

"Weel?"

"Aw, naethin'."

"But did ye no' gang ony walks?"

"Yinst."

"Wis that a'?"

"Ay, that wis a'."

Mrs. Munro looked inquiringly at her friend.

After a long silence, Mrs. M'Lerie said impressively: "It wis a goat."

"A whit?"

"A goat—a wild goat."

"Mercy me! . . . Did it dunch ye?"

"It tried it. Ay, an' it chased me fur near a mile! I thocht I wis dune fur!"

"But did ye no' try to frichten it awa'? Did ye no turn roon' an' face it, as it were?"

"Face it, Mistress Munro! If ye had seen thon awfu' beast loupin' aboot like mad an' tryin' to bore holes in ye wi' its frichtsome horns, ye wudna be talkin' aboot facin' it! *Facin'* it? Ma certy! I wud as shin face a ragin', roarin' lion!"

"Weel, weel," said Mrs. Munro, soothingly, "I daursay ye wis wice to rin

fur't. Discreetion is the better pairt o' valor, ye ken."

"Mphm. But I 'm thinkin' it wud be better if folk kept their wild goats chained. Ay!"

"But ye escaped, Mistress M'Lerie."

"I escaped, as ye say, Mistress Munro —an' nae mair. When I won back to the fairm an' yin o' the lassies got a grup o' the beast, I sank doon on the doorstep an' thocht I wud never get ma breith again."

"Ye wud be gey warm furbye."

"Warm! I wis jist meltin', an' yet it wis a kin' o' cauld warmness. An' fur twa days I wis jist shakin' an' trim'lin' an' cudna tak' ma meat."

"Dearie me! Did Mistress M'Corkindale no' gi'e ye onythin' to help ye—a wee taste speerits? Eh?"

"There 's nae drink in her hoose excep' fur her man. But I wudna ha'e

tooken it onywey. She gi'ed me co-co-a, an'—an' I wud ha'e gi'ed five shullin's fur a dish o' tea. But that wisna a', Mistress Munro, that wisna a'."

"Wis 't no'?"

"Na. Her an' her man laucht till I thocht they had baith gane clean daft."

"Laucht at ye?"

"Jist that. They tried to gar me believe it wis a tame goat—a *tame* goat—an' it wis jist wantin' to play wi' me. A *tame* goat—a TAME—"

"But maybe it *wis* a tame goat, Mistress M'Lerie."

For once in her life, Mrs. M'Lerie's face lowered on her friend. "I—I wisht ye had seen the beast as near as I did!" she cried indignantly.

"Aw, weel, I suppose ye 're richt aboot it bein' a wild yin."

"I suppose I am."

There was a somewhat uncomfortable

pause, and Mrs. Munro made an effort to change the subject. "An' whit did ye dae the ither days?" she inquired.

"I bided in the hoose."

"Wis it wat?"

"Na, it wisna wat," replied Mrs. M'Lerie, stiffly. Then, suddenly, seeing her old friend's distressed expression, she let her good humor return. With a laugh, she said: "Ye see, Mistress Munro, I didna feel I wis needin' ony mair exercise that week."

Mrs. Munro laughed also, and rose to go. "Ye 're gled to be hame, onywey," she said.

"'Deed, ay!" returned Mrs. M'Lerie, heartily. And as her friend left the house she called after her: "Mind, Mistress Munro, I never said I didna enjye masel'."

III

MRS. M'LERIE VISITS THE ZOO

"DAE ye mean to tell me, Mistress M'Lerie, that ye 've never been inside a zoo?" cried Mrs. Munro, falling back in her chair, staring at her friend, and emphasizing her astonishment by throwing up her hands, one of which grasped a slip of orange-colored paper.

"Never!" was the solemn reply.

"But ye 'll ha'e been in a traivelin' menagerie, maybe?"

"Nor that, either. But I 've been twicet in a paronama, an'—"

"Whit 's that ye say?"

"A paronama, Mistress Munro,—a kin' o' muckle pictur, ye ken. An' I wis yinst—"

"Aw, ye mean a panorama."

"Ay, that 'll be it. An' I wis yinst near inside an asquarian—"

"Aquarium."

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. As I wis tellin' ye, I wis yinst near inside an aquarian."

"An' whit wey did ye no' gang richt inside?"

"Weel, ye see, I gaed wi' Mistress M'Taggart—puir wumman! She 's been deid mony a year, but she wis he'rty enough then—an' she wis that stoot, puir buddy! she cudna win through the whurly thing whaur they tuk the money. The man wis fur openin' the big door to let her in, but we wis baith that affrontit, we jist gaed stracht hame to hide wur rid faces."

"That wis a sad job," said Mrs. Munro. "I mind Mistress M'Taggart fine. A dacent wumman she wis, an' aye cheery, conseederin' the burden laid

upon her, as it were. . . . But if ye 're ready noo, Mistress M'Lerie, we 'll awa' an' ha'e a keek at the beasts.''

''Are ye shair the tucket 's a' richt?'' Mrs. M'Lerie inquired. ''I aye ha'e ma doots aboot—''

''Ye needna be feart. As I tell't ye, ma man got it frae the lion-tamer when he wis daein' a bit plumber work at the Zoo, the ither day. It 's jist as guid as money at the door.''

''Weel, weel, I 'll say nae mair, Mistress Munro, I 'll sae nae mair, excep' that I yinst got a free tucket fur a bazaur, an' I shin f'un' oot it wis jist a trap to get me inside. I didna get oot *free,* I can tell ye!''

''Aw, I mind a' aboot the bazaur,'' said Mrs. Munro, rising from her friend's easy-chair, and smoothing down the front of her skirt. ''But I can promise ye, ye 'll ha'e nae cause to regret

peyin' a veesit to the Zoo. Noo we best be hurryin', or we 'll no' ha'e time to see a' the beasts."

"I 'm shair I dinna ken whit ma man 'll say aboot it," said Mrs. M'Lerie, as she left the house with her friend. "He 's that parteeclar."

"Toots! There 's nae innocenter enjyment nor the Zoo. 'Deed, I micht say it wis an enjyment lairgely freequented wi' meenisters. So ye needna be feart, Mistress M'Lerie."

"Weel, I maun be hame in guid time fur to get his tea ready."

"I 'll see to that, Mistress M'Lerie. Dinna fash yersel'! I 'll no' let ye be late. Jist pit yer trust in me."

Somewhat relieved of her varied forebodings, Mrs. M'Lerie hastened alongside her friend, and in about twenty minutes arrived at the entrance to the Zoo.

Mrs. Munro, not without some show of dignity and importance, presented her orange slip at the window of the pay-box.

A hand pushed it back to her, and a polite voice said: "Admits in the evening only."

"Whit 's that?" exclaimed Mrs. Munro.

"This pass is not available in the afternoon—only in the evening."

"Whit wey that?" she demanded.

"It 's the rule, ma'am," said the polite voice.

"The rule?"

"Yes. Kindly make way, ma'am."

A number of people were waiting admission, and, choking with indignation, Mrs. Munro pushed past them, followed by her puzzled companion.

"Is onythin' wrang?" asked the latter, when they halted in the open air.

"He said the tucket wis fur the evenin' only," gasped Mrs. Munro.

"An' wud he no' let us in?"

"Mphm! . . . Fine ham!"

"I—I wis feart it wis a trap," said Mrs. M'Lerie, sadly. "An' I thocht it wis gey suspeecious-like when the man wis hidin' hissel' in thon boax place. Ay, I wis feart it wis a trap."

"Ach, you an' yer traps!" cried Mrs. Munro, in an outburst of irritation. "You an' yer— Oh, I 'm shair I ask yer paurdon, Mistress M'Lerie. Ye maun excuse me bein' pit oot, as it were," she added more gently, noticing her friend's hurt expression. "I ask yer paurdon humbly."

"It 's grantit, it 's grantit," said Mrs. M'Lerie at once. "An' I suppose we best jist gang hame an' ha'e a dish o' tea, Mistress Munro."

"Na, na! I invitet ye fur to see the

wild beasts, an' ye 're gaun to see the wild beasts—ay, if I dee this vera meenit!"

"Ah, but ye mauna pit yersel' aboot, Mistress Munro, ye mauna pit yersel' aboot. I 'm no' sayin' I 'm no' wantin' to see the wild beasts—I 'm no' sayin' that—but ye mauna pit yersel' aboot."

Mrs. Munro, however, did not wait to hear the end of her companion's apology, but approached the pay-box once more, and said:

"Haw! you in the boax, whit 's the price fur twa?"

"Adults or juveniles?" the polite voice inquired.

"I 'll juvenile ye!" cried Mrs. Munro. "We 're twa dacent mairrit weemen, an' if ye wis oot yer boax I wud shin let ye ken that, ye—ye—ye cooard!"

"Sixpence each," said the polite voice, calmly.

"Saxpence each? Aweel, there 's a shullin'! But I doot if the hale jing-bang o' yer beasts is worth it. . . . Come awa,' Mistress M'Lerie."

"Thank you, ma'am," said the polite voice. "It would have been a pity to have given up your evening pass, because it admits to the circus as well as to the Zoo."

"D' ye tell me that?" exclaimed Mrs. Munro. "'Deed, sir, I 'm vexed fur whit I said. Ye see, I thocht ye wis gettin' the best o' me, you bein' in yer boax—concealed frae the public gaze, as it were. Yer paurdon, sir, an' thenk ye kindly."

"All right, ma'am. Pass in," said the polite voice, with something like a chuckle.

"Come awa', Mistress M'Lerie," cried Mrs. Munro. "Dinna be feart. There 's nae trap, an' the young man

in the boax isna whit ye thocht he wis."

Mrs. M'Lerie followed her friend into the Zoo, scarcely hearing the latter's further complimentary remarks on the "young man in the boax," and halted just inside the swing-doors, staring about her.

"Weel, whit dae ye think o' this?" inquired her guide in the patronizing voice of one who has "been there before."

"I—I dinna see ony meenisters," said Mrs. M'Lerie, doubtfully.

"Dae ye no'? That 's unusual. But, efter a', ye cam' to see wild beasts, an' there 's plenty o' them, I warrant ye! Come awa' an' see the lions an' the teagurs."

"Thenk ye, I think I 'll jist bide here, Mistress Munro, I 'll jist bide here."

"Ye 're no' feart, are ye?"

"Na; I 'm no' feart."

"Weel, come awa' an' see the beasts close. They 'll no' hurt ye. They canna win oot their cages. See! Thonder a lion!"

"Ay, I see it rale weel frae here, thenk ye."

"Thon 's no' the biggest lion."

"Is 't no'? It 's gey big. I doot it 's ett up folk in its day."

"No' it!" cried Mrs. Munro, laughing. "Come awa', an' dinna be feart." And she led the unwilling Mrs. M'Lerie toward the cages. "Is that no' a noble beast?" she asked, pointing to a captive.

"Ay, it 's gey noble. Oh, it 's wantin' to get at us! It 's roarin'!"

"Ach, ye 're quite safe! Mercy me! ye 're a' shakin', Mistress M'Lerie."

"I dinna like the beasts' *booin'*. It 's frichtsome. Are ye shair the cages is strong?"

"Oh, the cages is a' richt. But maybe we best gang an' see some o' the ither beasts first."

"'Deed, ay!" said Mrs. M'Lerie, eagerly. "Is there nae wee yins?"

"Wee yins? Whit kin' o' wee yins?"

"Rabbits an' hens, an' maybe white mice."

"I doot it. Ye see, this is a place fur *wild* beasts—wild beasts in a tame condeetion, so to speak," Mrs. Munro added hastily, noting the alarm on the other's face. "We 'll gang to the ither end an' see the elephants an' caymels," she went on, taking her friend's arm.

"It 's no' the first time I 've seen an elephant, onywey," observed Mrs. M'Lerie, plucking up courage. "I yinst seen twa-three in a procession, an' whiles I 've seen picturs in the 'Sunday Sentinel.' In fac,' I wud ken an elephant ony day. Thon yin 's gotten an' awfu'

wee trunk fur its size, has it no', Mistress Munro?''

''Tits, Mistress M'Lerie! That 's its tail!''

''Aweel, it 's a' yin,'' said Mrs. M'Lerie, the least thing annoyed.

''Come roon' here,'' said Mrs. Munro, who had stopped to purchase a penny-worth of biscuits, ''an' we 'll feed the beast.''

''Preserve us!'' cried Mrs. M'Lerie, a minute later, ''I thocht we wis gaun to be swallowed up like Jonah.''

''It wisna an elephant that got Jonah!''

''I ken that. But thon beast's mooth gi'ed me a fricht! An' whit awfu' feet! Come awa' quick, Mistress Munro. I dinna like it. If thon beast wis gettin' loose, it wud champ us like tatties.''

''Ye needna be feart, Mistress M'Lerie.''

"I never said I wis feart; but—but prevention 's better nor cure, as I yinst read on a bottle o' hair-ile in a doctor's shope."

"It 's a true sayin' that, but I think ye 're takin' yer pleesure ower solemn-like. Hoo dae ye like the caymels?" Mrs. Munro inquired, after a pause.

"I think they 're gey like me, Mistress Munro," returned Mrs. M'Lerie, with a sudden twinkle in her eye.

"Hoo that?"

"They 're takin' their pleesure ower solemn-like! Ha! ha!"

"My! that 's a guid bit joke! Ha! ha! ha! 'Deed, ay! Ha! ha! Mphm! Ye 're beginnin' to enjye yersel', maybe? Eh?"

"I am that, Mistress Munro, I am that! Though I maun alloo I wis a wee thing frichtit at the first. But I daursay

I 'm gettin' used to the danger. Oh, mercy! Whit 's thon beast?"

"It 's a species o' monkey."

"A speeshiso monkey? Weel, it 's fully as heathenish as its name, an' I 'm no' gaun near it—the nesty girnin' beast!"

. . . . . .

"Is there nae *bonny* beasts in the Zoo, Mistress Munro?" asked Mrs. M'Lerie, half-an-hour later.

"I canna say there is. But there 's a wheen bonny birds."

"Aw, I wud like fine to see the birds, so I wud!"

"I dinna think the birds is vera interrestin', but we 'll ha'e a keek at them. . . . There ye are!" And Mrs. Munro waved her hand toward a number of cages occupied by birds of more or less gaudy plumage.

Mrs. M'Lerie stood rapt in admiration, till her friend observed pleasantly:

"They beat yer stuffed birds, Mistress M'Lerie, dae they no'?"

"I wudna say that," she returned sharply. "Na, I wudna say that. Thae birds is vera fine an' numerous, but they 're no' jist up to *ma* birds, Mistress Munro. Na, na!"

"But luk at thon big yin—it 's ca'ed a toucan—"

"I 'm no' heedin' if it 's ca'ed a tin can—it 's no' up to ony o' ma—"

"But see thon gorgeous yin wi' the—"

"Na, na! There 's nane o' them can tich ma birds fur—fur *feenish.*" And Mrs. M'Lerie moved away from the cages.

"I hope ye 're no' offendit," said Mrs. Munro, following her. "I had nae thocht o' insultin' yer birds when I said—"

"I 'm no' the least offendit or insultit, Mistress Munro," the other replied;

"but, to tell ye truth, I 'm feart I 'll be late fur ma man the nicht."

"Oh, but ye 've no' seen hauf the Zoo yet. Ye 've no' seen the serpents nor the—"

"Thenk ye kindly; but I 've got to get sassingers fur ma man 's tea, an' it micht pit me aff cookin' them if I wis lukin' at boar-constructors an' ither terrifyin' reptiles the noo. I wish ye wud tell me the time, Mistress Munro."

"Jist come an' ha'e a keek at the zebra, Mistress M'Lerie. Ye 'll like the zebra. It 's a kin' o' strippit cuddy, an'—"

"Thenk ye, thenk ye; but I doot it 's time I wis awa' hame. . . . Whit 's the time, if ye please?" Mrs. M'Lerie inquired of an elderly man who happened to be standing beside her.

"Twenty past five," he replied, after consulting his watch.

"I maun gang, I maun gang!" cried Mrs. M'Lerie.

"Weel, if ye maun gang, ye maun gang," said Mrs. Munro. "I suppose ye conseeder yer man afore onythin'."

"Afore beasts, onywey," returned Mrs. M'Lerie, seriously. "No' but whit the beasts is rale fine an' interrestin'," she added, lest she should seem ungrateful.

IV

THE RAFFLE TICKET

"I HA'E ma doots, Mistress Munro, I ha'e ma doots," said Mrs. M'Lerie, wagging her head solemnly.

Her visitor smiled placidly as she smoothed a crease from her best gown, which had wrinkled slightly at her knees. "Ye sud try anither dish o' tea, Mistress M'Lerie," she said kindly.

"I cudna tak' anither moothfu'. But yer ain tea 's oot. See 's yer cup . . . Ay, an' try anither biscuit. Thur yins is ower sweet fur me, but maybe ye like them."

"Thenk ye," said Mrs. Munro, helping herself. "Weel, ye wis sayin'—"

"I wis sayin' I had ma doots, Mis-

tress Munro, I wis sayin' I had ma doots." And Mrs. M'Lerie, having laid aside her cup, stood up and carefully shook the crumbs from her lap into the fireplace. Resuming her seat, she raised the skirt of her dress, and plunged her hand deep into the big pocket in her petticoat. She produced an old-fashioned and worn bag purse, from which she extracted a small slip of pinkish paper.

"There it is!" she exclaimed mournfully, unfolding the paper. "There it is! Number— Aw, ye can read the number fur yersel', Mistress Munro. I cud never thole feegures."

"Sax hunner an' forty-twa," said Mrs. Munro, when she had inspected the slip.

"Mphm! Sax hunner an' forty-twa. I daursay ye 'll be richt. Onywey, I gi'ed a saxpence fur 't; an', as I wis

tellin' ye, if it wins the prize I get an organ."

"Weel, I 'm shair I 'll be rale gled if ye get the organ, Mistress M'Lerie. An' yer man 'll be gey prood."

"I ha'e ma doots, Mistress Munro, I ha'e ma doots. Fur I ken he 's no' haudin' wi' bazaurs an' rattles."

"Raffles," corrected Mrs. Munro, mildly.

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. But as shair 's I 'm here, I didna ken whit I wis daein'. I gaed to the bazaur on Setterday nicht, fur I wis tell't they wis gi'ein' things awa' fur hauf naethin', an' I wis wantin' to buy a bit coatie fur ma son John's wee lassie. Aw, ye never seen a bonnier wean. Aw, she 's that like her fayther if he wisna beardit. Aw, she's jist like thon advertizement fur some kin' o' sape; naw, it 's no' sape, it 's— Aweel, I canna mind the noo—but ye

never seen a bonnier wean, Mistress Munro."

"An' did ye buy the coatie?" inquired the visitor.

"That's whit I wis gaun fur to tell ye. I—" Here Mrs. M'Lerie rose hurriedly and went to the window. A van was rattling down the street.

"Na; it 's jist a mulk-cairt," she said, half to herself, and with a sigh of relief returned to her friend.

"Aweel, Mistress Munro, I didna buy the coatie, fur the yin I wantit wis ower dear. It wis a' a big lee aboot them sellin' aff chape. I suppose they wud be keepin' the things fur a jungle sale. But I bocht a pair o' wool booties wi' bew ribbons. My! they wis that tastey!"

"Wis they?"

"Ay; an' I bate the leddy doon ninepence."

"D'ye tell me that, Mistress M'Lerie?"

"Ay; as shair 's I 'm here. Weel, efter I bocht the booties I thocht I wud jist tak' a bit daunner roon'; an' roon I gaed, an' priced a guid wheen things, till I cam' to a place whaur lads wis tryin' fur to trim hats an' lasses wis tryin' fur to hammer nails—maistly their ain nails, I 'm thinkin'!—aw, I maun ha'e ma bit joke, Mistress Munro—in wudd! Sirs, the day! ye never seen sic a daft-like sicht, an' I lauched till I wis that warm an' short o' breith I cudna staun. An' I had jist tooken a sate, an' wis sittin' wipin' ma broo an' pechin', when a vera respectable-lukin' young man cam' up to me an' says, quite genteel-like, says he:

"'Wud ye like to buy a tucket fur an organ, ma'am?' Thae wis his vera words."

"An American organ? " put in Mrs. Munro.

"I dinna mind. Onywey, it wis an organ fur playin' on. Weel, the young man tell't me if I bocht a saxpenny tucket I wud maybe get the twinty-five-pun' organ the bazaur folk wis rattlin'. An—"

" '*Rafflin'*,' ye mean, Mistress M'Lerie."

"Ay, it 's a' yin. . . . An' I says to the young man, says I: 'Whaur 's the organ? ' An' he tell't me it wisna in the bazaur, but he wud sweer it wis a' richt, an' if I bocht a tucket I wud ha'e as guid a chance as onybody leevin' o' gettin' it. He wis a rale saft-spoken young man, an' that genteel, an' I wis that het an' wearit, an' afore I kent whit I wis daein' he wis awa' wi' ma saxpence, an' I wis sittin' alane wi' the tucket. . . . An' I ha'e ma

doots, Mistress Munro, I ha'e ma doots."

"Oh, but ye needna be feart, Mistress M'Lerie. They 'll no' cheat ye," said her friend, soothingly. "The bazaur wis fur a kirk, wis 't no'? "

"Ay. But that 's no' whit 's vexin' me. I 'm no' feart o' bein' cheatit. They best no' try that gemm wi' me! Na! . . . But, ye see, Mistress Munro, ma man didna ken I gaed to the bazaur, an' I wudna ha'e been there if it hadna been I wis wantin' a coatie fur ma son John's wee lassie, an' ma man 's no' haudin' wi' bazaurs, faur less rattles; an'—an'—oh! Mistress Munro, whit wud I say to him if they brocht the organ to the hoose? " Mrs. M'Lerie looked a miserable inquiry at her visitor, and then, shaking her head, returned the ticket to her purse and the latter to her pocket.

"Hoots, toots! Mistress M'Lerie,"

said the other, cheerfully. "I 'm shair yer man's no' that parteeclar."

"Ah, ye dinna ken him, Mistress Munro. I never kent a man as stric' as hissel'. D'ye no' mind hoo he left Maister M'Cubbin's kirk twal' year syne because they wis gaun to ha'e a bazaur? An' ye never met a better man nor Maister M'Cubbin—never!"

"Ay; but yer man's maybe no' jist as stric' as he wis, Mistress M'Lerie?"

"Is he no'? I ha'e ma doots, Mistress Munro, I ha'e ma doots. Ay; an' mony's the time I've heard him say he wud as shin pit money on a horse-race as intil a disruption sale."

"Subscription sale."

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. An' whit 's a rattle but a disruption sale? It 's jist the same; ay, there 's no' a hair o' difference 'twixt the twa. Oh!—oh, there's a cairt stoppin' at the close!" And

again Mrs. M'Lerie hastened to the window, to find that it was only the baker.

"Mercy me! ye 're a' trim'lin'," said Mrs. Munro, when her hostess returned to her. "Whit 's ado? "

"I thocht it wis the organ," gasped Mrs. M'Lerie. "Every cairt comin' alang the street gars ma he'rt loup to ma mooth. Ye see, the prizes wis to be decidet the day. Miss Paurley tell't me. Ma man 's her fayther's foresman, ye ken, an' we gang to Doctor Jamieson's kirk. An' when we wis comin' oot the kirk on Sawbath she cam' up to me—fur she's rale nice an' free—an' she says, says she, 'I seen ye at the bazaur.' An' says I, 'Whisht, fur ony favor, Miss Paurley.' John wis ahint me, speakin' to yin o' the elders. An' Miss Paurley gi'ed a bit smile and whispers, 'I hope ye get the organ, Mrs. M'Lerie. I 'm

on the commytee, an' the drawin' o' prizes is on Wensday, so I'll gi'e ye a ca' i' the efternune, an' tell ye if ye've gotten it.' An' then she gaed aff, an' John cam' furrit. An' I cudna mind a word o' the discoorse fur thinkin' o' the organ."

"Oh, ye 've tooken it ower muckle to he'rt, Mistress M'Lerie. Efter a' ye 'll maybe no' get the organ. I'm thinkin' it 's a guid sign when Miss Paurley hasna came."

"It 's no' vera late yet. An' she 's maybe furgot to come, an' they 'll send the organ wi'oot warnin'. An' whit 'll I dae then? They 'll pit the organ in, an' it 'll be a judgment on me fur gam'-lin'."

"Na, na. It's no' as bad as a' that —if ye get the organ. 'Deed, I wud be richt thenkfu' to get an organ fur sax-pence. An'—here! Listen to me, Mis-

tress M'Lerie," cried her visitor, struck by an idea.

"Eh?"

"Ye wudna need to tak' the organ in the hoose. Ye cud get them to tak' it back to the shope, an' ye cud sell it back to them chape, an' ye cud buy—oh! Mistress M'Lerie, jist think whit ye cud buy fur yer son John's wee lassie."

"Weel, I never!" gasped Mrs. M'Lerie.

"Whit think ye o' that?" asked her friend, gaily. "There a notion fur ye!" she added proudly.

Mrs. M'Lerie's highly moral feelings were quite swamped by the flood of joyous possibilities. She saw herself with a secret store of wealth from which she made occasional offerings at the shrine of her little granddaughter. "I 'll dae 't!" she cried at last,

"I 'll dae 't! When the organ comes I 'll—"

"There somebody at the door," said Mrs. Munro.

"It 'll be Miss Paurley," cried Mrs. M'Lerie, and fled to hear the news.

. . . . . .

"Weel? Ha'e ye gotten the organ?" inquired Mrs. Munro, three minutes later.

Mrs. M'Lerie silently shook her head, choked slightly, and rubbed the back of her hand across her eyes.

"That 's an unco peety," said Mrs. Munro, gently.

"Miss Paurley brocht me a rale braw shawl in a present," faltered Mrs. M'Lerie, "But—but she tell't me a man in P-P-Paisley had gotten the organ. Sirs the day! An' ma son John's wee lassie—"

Her friend looked sympathetic.

"Weel, weel, it's a' by noo. An' we canna blame onybody. Thae things is aye dune fair, as fair can be, so we—"

"I ha'e ma doots, Mistress Munro, I ha'e ma doots," sighed Mrs. M'Lerie.

V

MRS. MUNRO'S PARTY

"COME ben, come ben, Mistress M'Lerie," said Mrs. Munro, eagerly. "It wis rale kind o' ye to come early, and to bring the birds wi' ye. 'Deed, it wis mair nor or'nar' kind o' ye. An' ye 're that warm!"

"Ay, I'm warm," gasped Mrs. M'Lerie. "I never thocht the birds wis as heavy afore," she added, as she entered her friend's little parlor.

"Weel, ye cairrit them a gey lang road, an' I'm awfu' obleeged to ye. . . . Sit doon, sit doon an' rest ye. Pit the birds on the side table. Wud ye tak' jist a toothfu' o' speerits, Mistress M'Lerie?"

"Na, na; thenk ye kindly, a' the same," replied the visitor, holding up her right hand, as if to emphasize her rejection of the offer. "I'll jist sit a wee an' get ma breith. Hech! sirs the day! I never thocht the birds wis hauf as heavy."

"I'm rale vexed I canna gi'e ye a dish o' tea jist this meenit, but if ye'll wait, I 'll—"

"Aw, dinna fash yersel', Mistress Munro, dinna fash yersel'. I ken ye maun be sair thrang the day. . . . Dinna fash yersel.' I 'm no' heedin' aboot tea. I cudna drink it if ye wis to poor it doon ma throat. I cudna, reely. Ye see, I cam' roon' to help ye the day—no' to mak' mair wark fur ye, an'—"

"Weel, it's rale kind o' ye. An' I wish ye wis comin' to yer supper the nicht," said Mrs. Munro.

"Aweel, we'll no' say ony mair aboot

that," said Mrs. M'Lerie, in tones suggesting longing, regret, and perhaps resignation. "Noo," she continued, rising from her seat, "I'll shin ha'e the birds ready fur ye." And going to the table, she began to undo the large parcel she had brought with her. It was wrapped in numerous newspapers, and tied with several varieties of string, supplemented by some yards of gray worsted.

"I doot I wudna get a job in a shope," remarked Mrs. M'Lerie, with a laugh. "I never cud mak' a nate paircel."

"I think ye've made a *vera* nate paircel, Mistress M'Lerie," returned her friend, who was anxiously watching the undoing. "An' I think it's maist extraor'nar' kind o' ye to len' me yer birds."

"Toots, havers! Mistress Munro! It's

naethin' ava'. Of coorse, ye ken, I wudna len' ma birds to *onybody*. Nae fears! But you an' me 's auld freen's, Mistress Munro—I'm sayin' we're auld freen's—an' I ken ye 'll tak' guid care o' the birds."

"I wull that, Mistress M'Lerie. I'll tak' rale guid care o' yer birds. . . . My! As shair 's I 'm here, I never seen sic fine birds!"

Mrs. M'Lerie, having removed the wrappings, gazed with great gratification at her case of stuffed birds, and could not help smiling proudly as Mrs. Munro poured forth her eulogies.

"Mistress M'Lerie," said the latter, enthusiastically, "I've seen mony birds, but never ony like thur!"

"Och, ye 're jist sayin' that fur to please me, Mistress Munro," murmured the other, delightedly.

" May I dee this vera meenit!" ex-

claimed Mrs. Munro, "if I 'm no' speakin' the plain truth! An' I tell ye I'm rale prood to ha'e the birds sittin' on the wee table at the pairty, an' I 'm awfu' obleeged to ye fur the len' o' them. Thon paurrit's jist glorious!"

"It 's no' a paurrit, Mistress Munro, it 's a bird o' Paradise. The yin ablow it's a paurrit, and the wee yin abin it's a hummin'-bird—it mak's a bizz like a bum-bee—that 's whit I wis tell't, onywey, but I ha'e ma doots—an' the ither yin 's a nostreech, an'—"

"Aw, it's no' an ostrich, Mistress M'Lerie," said Mrs. Munro, smiling.

"Is't no'? Weel, I'm shair that wis whit Captain Bawr tell't ma man when he gi'ed him the birds. Ay; I 'm shair he said it wis a nostreech."

"Ostriches is lairge beasts wi' lang legs like hens, an' ostrich feathers in their tails."

"Are they? Maybe ye're richt; but I'm shair Captain Bawr said—"

"Folk can ride on ostriches," said Mrs. Munro.

"Fine ham!" said Mrs. M'Lerie.

"But I 've seen picturs o' folk ridin' on ostriches," Mrs. Munro insisted.

Mrs. M'Lerie gave a sniff. "I yinst seen a pictur o' a man ridin' a coke on a steeple," she said derisively.

"But I seen a pictur i' the 'Sawbath Companion,'" returned Mrs. Munro, triumphantly. "If it wisna the 'Sawbath Companion,' it wis the 'Sunday Treasury.'"

"Weel, I daursay I'm wrang," admitted Mrs. M'Lerie, overcome by the evidence against her. "But I aye thocht the bird wis a nostreech. . . . Maybe it's a young yin, jist oot the egg," she suggested hopefully.

Mrs. Munro shook her head. "Na,

na; an ostrich's egg 's faur bigger nor yer bird wi' a' its feathers. I yinst seen an ostrich's egg in the museum."

"Mphm! Ye see some queer like sichts in the museum, Mistress Munro; ye see some gey queer like—"

"Tits! Ye're no' to be offendit. I'm jist tellin' ye whit I ken aboot ostriches, Mistress M'Lerie. I 'm thinkin' the bird we're speakin' aboot is a kin' o' furrin bird—a kin' o' cockatoo, maybe."

"Aweel, it's a' yin," said Mrs. M'Lerie. "But I aye thocht it wis a nostreech. . . . I 'm no' heedin' onywey."

"Whitever it is," exclaimed Mrs. Munro, pleasantly, "it 'll be a fine ornament to ma paurlor; an' I'm shair it'll be vera highly admired an' tooken notice o'."

Her visitor could not but feel gratified. "Weel, I 'm shair I 'm gled ye 're

pleased, Mistress Munro; I 'm gled ye 're pleased," she said.

"I 'm jist vexed ye canna come to yer supper," Mrs. Munro replied. "It wis a daft-like thing o' me to ha'e a pairty on the Wensday nicht when I micht ha'e mindit that you and yer man gaed to the prayer-meetin'."

"Aweel, it cudna be helpit," sighed her friend.

" Ye see," said Mrs. Munro, rather apologetically, "ma dochter Jeannie—her that 's mairrit on Rubbert M'Culloch—wis in the hoose on Setterday, and she says to me, says she, 'Whit day 's Wensday? ' An' I says to her, says I, 'Wensday 's jist Wensday.' An' she lauchs a wee, an' I speirs at her whit she 's lauchin' at. An' she turns to Rubbert an' she says to him, says she, 'Rubbert, wud ye like me to furget ma waddin' day? ' An' Rubbert gi'es her

a wink, an' tells her to haud her tongue. But she gi'es anither bit lauch, an' says to me, 'Are ye no' fur ha'ein' a pairty on Wensday, mither?' says she. 'A pairty?' says I. 'Whit fur a pairty?' 'Weel, on Wensday, you an' fayther 'll ha'e been mairrit five-an'-twinty year,' says she. At that, ma man, wha 's noddin' at the fireside, luks up an' cries, 'A hunner an' twinty-five year, ye mean.' He maun aye ha'e his bit joke, ye ken, Mistress M'Lerie. Ha! ha! 'Deed, ay! . . . An' then ma dochter Jeannie says to me, says she, 'Ye maun ha'e a pairty, mither, fur it 'll be yer siller waddin'!'"

"Oh, I see the meanin' o' the pairty noo," said Mrs. M'Lerie. "But I doot yer dochter 's gaun in wi' the gentry, Mistress Munro, I doot she 's gaun in wi' the gentry!"

"I'm feart ye 're richt, Mistress M'Lerie. But whit can a buddy dae?

The young yins flees up afore ye ken whaur ye are! An' afore I kent whaur I wis, I said I wud ha'e a pairty, an' ma man said I maun keep ma word. Ma certy! Ye never ken whit a man 'll say or dae!"

"Ye 're richt there, Mistress Munro, ye 're richt there! But I 'm rale gled ye 're gaun to ha'e a pairty. . . . But we best be stairtin' to pit things stracht."

"'Deed, ay," assented Mrs. Munro, and for nearly an hour the twain labored between the parlor and the kitchen.

"Ye 'll be ha'ein' a pie the nicht," remarked Mrs. M'Lerie when, at last, they sat down for a brief rest and a dish of tea.

"Jist that. Sandy Broon, the baker, is coverin' it an' firin' it, an' he 's no chairgin' onythin', seein' he 's comin' to the pairty hissel'. An' we 're ha'ein' ham

sangwiches furbye—ma dochter said it wisna the thing to ha'e an' evenin' pairty, as she ca'ed it, wi'oot sangwiches—an' she said she wud mak' them hersel'. If ye jist keek intil the press ahint ye, Mistress M'Lerie, ye 'll see maist o' the things that 'll be on the table the nicht."

"My!" was about all the visitor could say when she inspected the store of good things. "My!"

"Ye see, I tell't ma man there wis nae use ha'ein' a pairty an' no' feedin' the folk. An' he said, lauchin'-like, says he, 'Ye 're richt there, auld wife; an' I think I cud enjye a dacent meal masel' efter five-an'-twinty years.' He maun ha'e his bit joke, ye ken. Ha! ha! . . . But I 'm that vexed ye canna come to yer supper the nicht, Mistress M'Lerie. I 'm shair yer man micht let ye aff the meetin' fur yince. Onywey, he micht

come wi' ye efter the meetin 's ower. I ken he 's rale stric', but—"

"Aw, whisht, whisht, Mistress Munro!"

"But shairly ye micht gi'e him a bit hint that ye 're wantin' to—"

"Na, na; na, na!" said her friend, sadly. "He wudna like it. . . . Whit maun be maun be. . . . I'm thinkin' we best be gettin' on wi' tidyin' the paurlor," she said, with a badly feigned cheerfulness.

A minute later she was polishing the glass case of her beloved birds, and saying to herself, "Aweel, it 's a' yin."

VI

MRS. M'LERIE IS DEPRESSED

WITH an expression of profound anxiety, Mrs. Munro regarded her old friend, who sat opposite her in a languid and listless attitude, gazing hopelessly at the fire without noticing that it required replenishing. Mrs. Munro had brought back the case of stuffed birds which Mrs. M'Lerie had lent her a few days previous, but Mrs. M'Lerie had received the best beloved of her household treasures without the slightest sign of animation, remarking gloomily: "Aweel, it 's a' yin," and sighing heavily.

"But I 've tooken rale guid care

o' yer birds, Mistress M'Lerie," Mrs. Munro had said, truthfully enough.

"Ay, I 'm shair o' that," Mrs. M'Lerie had returned. "But the birds is jist vanity, an' I doot I 've been ower prood o' them." And here she had groaned.

Then Mrs. Munro, fairly puzzled, and not a little depressed, had laid the case on the parlor table and seated herself in the chair she had come to regard as her own; and Mrs. M'Lerie had collapsed into the arm-chair on the other side of the fireplace and had groaned again.

"Whit 's like the maitter, Mistress M'Lerie? " the visitor had at last made bold to inquire.

"Oh, I 'm no' weel, Mistress Munro, I 'm no' weel," the hostess had replied.

Mrs. Munro had been so surprised at the doleful statement, that words had

failed her, and all she could do was to gaze anxiously, and also sympathetically, at the other for nearly ten minutes.

But at last she said gently, "'Deed, I 'm sair vexed to hear ye sayin' ye 're no' weel, Mistress M'Lerie. I 'm shair I never heard ye say sic a thing afore. Is 't yer heid that 's hurtin' ye? "

"Na; it 's no' jist exac'ly ma heid. . . . But I 'm no' weel, Mistress Munro, I 'm no' weel."

"Hoots, toots! Ye 're lukin' fine!" said Mrs. Munro, with an effort at cheeriness.

Mrs. M'Lerie shook her head, and kept silence.

"Is there onythin' I can get ye? " inquired her friend, greatly disturbed.

Mrs. M'Lerie shook her head again. After a little pause she said, slowly and tremulously, "It wis a peety ye brocht back the birds, Mistress Munro;

I 'm thinkin' it wis a peety ye had a' the trouble o' bringin' back the birds."

"I cudna dae less. I'm shair it wis rale kind o' ye to len' me the birds. I can tell ye, Mistress M'Lerie, the birds wis greatly admired an' tooken notice o'."

"Wis they? " inquired Mrs. M'Lerie, interested for a moment. But she relapsed immediately. "But it wis a peety ye had a' the trouble o' bringin' back the birds. Fur I—I wis gaun to leave the birds to ye onywey, Mistress Munro; ay, I 'm sayin' I 'm gaun to leave ma birds to yersel,' an' naebody else, ma auld freen'." And poor Mrs. M'Lerie almost wept.

"Leave yer birds to me?" exclaimed Mrs. Munro, quite mystified.

"Ay, jist that. Ye—ye 'll get the birds when I 'm deid, Mistress Munro;

ay, ye 'll get the birds, and the gless case furbye, when—''

Then Mrs. Munro rose in alarm. ''Ye 're no' to say sic' awfu' things!'' she cried.

Mrs. M'Lerie did not appear to hear. ''I 'm shair ye 'll tak' guid care o' ma birds when I 'm awa','' she said softly. ''Aye keep the gless on. . . . I 'm feart fur cats gettin' at the birds. . . . I mind Mistress M'Conky had birds—they wisna near as fine as mine—an' yinst when she wis washing the gless the cat gaed into the paurlor an' pu'ed the heids an' wings an' tails aff a' the birds. Ay, an'—''

But Mrs. Munro was now quite terrified. ''Whit 's ado wi' ye, whit 's ado wi' ye?'' she exclaimed.

''I 'm no' weel, Mistress Munro, I 'm no' weel,'' was the reply, given sadly and humbly.

"But—but—*whaur* are ye no' weel?" gasped her visitor in desperation.

"It 's ma back, Mistress Munro, it 's ma back."

"Yer back? Mercy me! Whit 's wrang wi' yer back?"

Mrs. M'Lerie made no response.

"Ha'e ye had the doctor the day?" asked Mrs. Munro.

"Na."

"When had ye the doctor?"

"Never."

"Never! Oh, wumman, whit wey dae ye no' get the doctor when ye 're no' weel? Wull I rin doon to the druggist an' tell him ye want him to send up Doctor M'Haffie? Ay, I 'll jist dae that."

"Na, na! Ye 're no' to dae that."

"Ay, but I wull! If ye 're no' weel, ye maun get the doctor." And Mrs. Munro made to leave the room.

"Stope! Ye 're no' to gang!" cried her friend. "The doctor canna dae me ony guid."

"We 'll shin see aboot that!"

"Weel, weel, bide a wee, Mistress Munro. Sit ye doon, an' I 'll tell ye a' aboot it. . . . I 'm sayin' the doctor canna dae me ony guid. Or 'nar' meddicines is nae guid fur me. . . . Sit ye doon, Mistress Munro, sit ye doon."

Rather unwillingly, Mrs. Munro resumed her seat. She was certainly much paler than her hostess.

"Is yer back hurtin' ye the noo?" she inquired nervously.

"No' jist the noo," said Mrs. M'Lerie. "No' jist the noo," she repeated, almost as if she were ashamed of having to make the admission. "It 's aye bad at nicht jist aboot the time when he comes hame to his tea."

"But whit dis yer man say aboot it, Mistress M'Lerie?"

"Oh! Ye mauna let bug to ma man! I wudna tell him fur onythin'! "

"Ah, but that 'll no' dae, that 'll no' dae! I 'm shair yer man wud be sair pit aboot; but, a' the same, he sud ken if ye 're no' weel. But I 'm thinkin' ye 're maybe no' as bed as ye think ye are," said Mrs. Munro, kindly, meaning to administer comfort and encouragement.

"I 'm tellin' ye I 'm near dune fur," said Mrs. M'Lerie, a trifle sharply.

"Och, ye 're no' to say that. Ye 're jist a wee thing doon i' the mooth, an' if ye wis gettin' the doctor, he wud shin—"

"The doctor canna dae me ony guid."

"Hoo dae ye ken that? "

"The paper says it."

"The paper? Whit paper? "

"The paper aboot the peells. . . . Here the paper." And Mrs. M'Lerie, after some fumbling, produced from the large pocket of her petticoat a frequently folded sheet of shabby green paper with much printing upon it.

Mrs. Munro stretched out her hand for it, but her friend retained it, regarding the letterpress with dismal interest. "I 've tooken seeven boaxes, an' I 'm nae better," she observed, with a sigh. "An' the paper says sax boaxes is suffeecient fur to effect a cure in the maist convex cases."

"Eh? . . . Oh, ay; ye mean *complex* cases. *Complex* is anither word fur 'confused.' "

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. . . . But the paper says when yinst the disease gets a grup o' ye, nae doctor can dae ye ony guid; but if ye tak' the peells in time—yin efter every meal—ye get better. But

ye 've got to tak' the peells in time, Mistress Munro, ye 've got to tak' them in time. . . . An' I didna tak' them in time. An' the paper says mony a life is lost wi' no' takin' the peells in time. . . . That 's me!"

"Ach!" cried Mrs. Munro, trying to laugh, but feeling more like tears, "ye 're no' to believe a' ye see in prent. Na!"

"Ay; but luk at a' the testimonies o' the meenisters," said Mrs. Munro, handing the green paper to her visitor, and indicating a long column of testimonials signed by reverend gentlemen.

Mrs. Munro read over the pamphlet, which set forth that there was no cure for a pain in the back but Doctor Dollop's Glistening Globules; and that a pain in the back, if neglected for any length of time, was almost sure to develop, more or less quickly, into death.

The pamphlet was a lurid affair, and Mrs. M'Lerie had been deeply and cruelly affected by it since she had found it, some three months ago, among the pages of her favorite and venerated paper, "The Sunday Sentinel."

"Ye never tell't me aboot this," said Mrs. Munro, when she had read through most of the pamphlet, not without being impressed by its many terrible warnings.

"Aweel, I didna want to disturb ye; an' I thocht I wud be better efter I had tooken sax boaxes o' the peells. But I 'm no' ony better, an'—an'—"

"But maybe the paper 's a' wrang."

"I 've tried to think that, Mistress Munro, I 've tried to think that. But I canna gang ag'in' a' the meenisters' testimonies. An' if the peells cured the meenisters, whit wey did they no' cure

me? . . . It 's jist because I wis ower late—ower late—takin' them."

Mrs. Munro drew a long breath. Then she said, with considerable violence, "De'il tak' yer 'Sunday Sentinel,' an' yer Doctor Dollops, an' yer peely-wally meenisters, an'—"

"Aw, whisht, whisht," said Mrs. M'Lerie.

"I 'll no' whisht!" retorted Mrs. Munro. "Hoo lang has yer back been hurtin' ye?" she suddenly demanded.

"Ten year, onywey," replied Mrs. M'Lerie, sighing. "Ten year," she repeated, "an' the paper disna tell o' onybody bein' cured efter seeven year. . . . Sirs, the day! It 's a wunner I 'm leevin' yet. It maun be whit they ca' a spaycial dispensary o' Providence that—"

"Ye mean *dispensation,* Mistress M'Lerie?"

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. But—"

"Ye wis tellin' me yer back disna hurt ye the noo," Mrs. Munro interrupted. "Dis it hurt ye ever i' the mornin'?"

"Na; I canna say it dis."

"I' the efternune? "

"Whiles. But it 's warst at nicht."

"Mphm," muttered Mrs. Munro, looking thoughtful. "I suppose," she went on presently, "it 'll hurt ye gey sair efter ye 're scrubbit the kitchen flure?"

"Ay, it hurts me warst then."

"An' ye scrub the kitchen flure every Wensday mornin' efter yer guid man 's aff to his work? Eh?"

"Ay."

"An' yesterday wis Wensday, wis 't no', Mistress M'Lerie? "

"Ay. Fine I ken it wis! I thocht ma back wis broke."

"Jist that. An' the ither mornin's

ye 're at yer son John's hoose, helpin' his guidwife an' dandlin' his wee lassie, an'—"

"Aw, ye never seen a bonnier wean!" cried Mrs. M'Lerie, smiling proudly.

"An' then ye come hame an' get things ready fur yer man," continued Mrs. Munro.

"Ay, jist that. But ye never seen a bonnier wean, Mistress Munro, ye never seen a bonnier wean! An' she 's got twa teeth noo, an' ye never hear her girn, an'—"

"Dootless," said her friend, shortly. "But whit I wis gaun to say wis this—" She paused.

"Whit?" asked Mrs. M'Lerie.

"I wis gaun to ask ye fur a wheen o' yer peells, fur ma back 's been sair near every nicht since I wis mairrit. D' ye hear, Mistress M'Lerie? Ma back 's been sair near every—"

"An' ye never let bug," said Mrs. M'Lerie, with a quick look of sympathy. "Aw, Mistress Munro, I 'm that vexed!"

"Aweel, ye can gi'e 's yer peells," cried the other.

Mrs. M'Lerie gazed wonderingly at her friend for several seconds. Then she took a pill-box from the mantelpiece.

"Ye 're welcome to the peells," she said. "Maybe," she added doubtfully, "they 'll dae *you* guid."

"Thenk ye," said Mrs. Munro, taking the pill-box and putting it into the reddest part of the fire.

"Oh, dearie me!" cried Mrs. M'Lerie.

Her visitor burst into a loud laugh. "Sair back!" she exclaimed. "Ye 're no' the only wife in Glesca wi' a sair back when the nicht comes! An' ye think yer deein'!"

"But—but—but—"

"Aw, Mistress M'Lerie, ma auld freen', yer back 's maybe sair, but yer e'e 's as bricht as when ye wis a lassie. Micht I speir if ye wis concairned aboot yer back afore ye read this paper?" And Mrs. Munro put the paper where she had put the pill-box.

Mrs. M'Lerie did not reply at once, but when she did it was in rather an apologetic fashion. And after saying, "I ha'e ma doots," to several of her friend's cheering observations, she admitted that, after all, she might have been suffering from nothing worse than a slight attack of "nervous agility," and confessed that she did not feel a bit older than she had done a year ago.

"Weel, weel," she said, "maybe ye 're richt, an' maybe I 'm wrang. . . . But

ye see, I didna want to vex ma man, an' I didna want to vex ma son John, an' I didna want to vex yersel', Mistress Munro, an'—an'— Are ye fur a dish o' tea, Mistress Munro? ''

VII

AN AFFRONT

"COME awa' ben, Mistress Munro, come awa' ben," said Mrs. M'Lerie, hospitably, guiding her friend into the little parlor.

"Are ye no' ower busy?" inquired Mrs. Munro.

"Na, na; I 'm no' that thrang the day. An' hoo 's a' wi' ye? Ye 'll ha'e come roon' to hear aboot the surree, like?"

"Jist that, Mistress M'Lerie. But I 'm no' gaun to bide a meenit if ye 're the least thing thrang."

"Aw, sit ye doon, sit ye doon. The kettle 's jist on the bile, an' we 'll ha'e a dish o' tea, an' I 'll tell ye a' aboot

the surree, an' welcome. It wis an unco peety ye cudna gang, but it wis a mercy ye hadna peyed fur yer tuckets, you an' yer man. I mind when auld Mistress Wallace's man got twa tuckets fur a surree an' peyed fur them jist three days afore he dee'd. An', if ye 'll believe me, Mistress Munro, Mistress Wallace has thae tuckets yet, an' they 're near twal' year auld."

"Cud she no' get the money back?" asked Mrs. Munro, who had seated herself at the window.

"No' a farden! The commytee gaed bankrupt. I heard it wis wi' gi'ein' the folk a' a cookie ower an' abin the usual —onywey, it tuk them a' their time to pey the baker an' the singers, let alane Mistress Wallace."

"But I wudna think the commytee that wis lukin' efter last nicht's surree wud gae bankrupt an' refuse fur

to pey fur tuckets that hadna been used."

"Maybe no', Mistress Munro, maybe no'. But I aye think it 's jist a temptin' o' Providence to buy tuckets fur a surree afore the vera day. Of coorse, ye ken the yin I had fur last nicht wis—wis—whit d' ye ca' it?"

"Complimentary."

"Ay. So I wisna takin' ony risk, as it were. But I maun see aboot the tea. Keep yer sate, Mistress Munro, I 'll no' be lang."

Five minutes later the twain were together again.

"Weel, aboot the surree, Mistress M'Lerie," said Mrs. Munro, as soon as the cups were filled.

"Weel, as ye ken, ma man, bein' foresman in sic a big work as Maister Paurley's, wis on the platform, an' Mistress Gairdner an' masel' gaed early an' got

a sate whaur we had a graun view o' the hale proceedin's. There wis mony a bigger dickie on the platform, but no' yin cleaner nor ma man's."

"I believe ye, Mistress M'Lerie. Wha wis in the chair? " put in Mrs. Munro.

"I dinna mind his name, but I wis rale vexed fur him when he got up to mak' a speech. He had nae mair v'ice nor a moose, but to see him ye wud ha'e thocht he wis roarin' at the folk. An' he wis shakin' an' sweetin' an' pechin', puir man, an' the folk wis aye gi'ein' him a bit stamp an' cheer to gar him haste, an' the yins on the platform whiles clappit an' duntit the table to encourage him. 'Deed, I wis vexed fur him. Ma man said to me efter that he wis a rale fine gentleman, but nae spokesman."

"But a' that wud be efter ye had yer tea."

"Ay. I wis gaun to tell ye aboot the tea. My! I wis that affrontit wi' Mistress Gairdner! Aw, ye never seen sic a thing, Mistress Munro!"

"Whit wis that? She wisna poochin', shairly."

"Na, na. But she wis poorin' oot the tea frae yin o' thon things, an'—"

"Ye mean the urn."

"Mphm. She wis fillin' her ain cup when she begood to sneeze, an' pu'ed back her haun' quick, ye ken. But her finger wis catched in the wee handle, an' she pu'ed ower the hale affair, an' broke twa cups an' a saucer, an' drookit a' her pastries, an' soakit her claes, an' gey near droondit a wean wha wis sittin' aside her! . . . But that wisna whit affrontit me. Afore I kent whaur I wis, she had slippit oot the door—we wis sittin' near a door, ye ken—an' she never cam' back. An' near a' the folk thocht I had made the mess—ay, even the

waiter said, 'Ye auld footer!' ablow his breith, an' a laddie in the gallery cried doon, 'Haw, Mistress, is yer biler brustit?'"

"The impiddence!" exclaimed Mrs. Munro, indignant and sympathetic.

"But that wisna a'," went on Mrs. M'Lerie, "that wisna a', Mistress Munro. It wis a gey lang while afore I cud luk up at the platform again, an' when I did tak' a bit keek, there wis ma man sittin' wi' a rid face an' no' peyin' ony attention to his tea or the crack that wis gaun on roon' aboot him. I tried fur to catch his e'e, but he wudna luk ma wey, an' I shin seen that he wis affrontit tae. An' I wis near cryin' oot to him, 'It wisna me, it wisna me!' jist like a wean, ye ken."

"'Deed, I can unnerstaun' hoo ye wud feel, Mistress M'Lerie," said Mrs. Munro, kindly.

"Aw, I wis that ashamed, Mistress

Munro, I wis that ashamed. I tried to eat ma pastry, but it wis like to choke me; an' yinst or twicet I wis near gettin' up an' fleein' awa' hame. But I thocht it wis best to keep ma sate, an' efter a wee the folk stoppit frae lukin' at me, an' the wean that Mistress Gairdner had near droondit wi' the tea says to me, the daurlin'! says she, 'I ken it wisna you, Mistress.' An' that gar'd me feel a wee thing easier, an' I gi'ed her ma pastry. Then we a' got up an' sang the psawm, ye ken, an' efter that cam' the speakin' that I tell't ye aboot."

"An' efter that the concert, nae doot."

"Jist that. But I didna enjye the concert, Mistress Munro, I didna enjye the concert."

"Did ye no'? Had they no' a guid comic? I aye think the concert depends on the comic, Mistress M'Lerie. The

ither singers is a' vera weel fur gi'ein' the comic a bit rest. Had they no' a guid comic last nicht? ''

''Ay, I 'm no' sayin' onythin' ag'in' him; an' the folk wis a' lauchin' whinever he cam' on the platform. But—but hoo cud I lauch at a comic, Mistress Munro, hoo cud I lauch at a comic wi' ma man sittin' there lukin' meeserable? Tell me that, Mistress Munro!''

''Weel, weel,'' said the visitor, soothingly, ''I daursay ye 're richt. But maybe if ye had gi'ed a lauch noo an' then, yer man micht ha'e lauched tae. D'ye see?''

''Ay, I see whit ye mean. But I maun tell ye, that I wis whit they ca' laborin' intil a collusion, Mistress Munro.''

''Eh? Oh, ay. Under a delusion, ye mean.''

''Aweel, it 's a' yin. I wis laborin'

that wey, onywey. I thocht ma man wis affrontit, but I f'un' oot efter it wis jist his teeth wis hurtin' him."

"D'ye tell me that? Dearie me! He sud get them ta'en oot, Mistress M'Lerie."

"'Deed, they 're jist new in, puir man. An' that wis the wey he cudna tak' his tea nor lauch at the comic. But I didna ken that till the surree wis ower." Mrs. M'Lerie paused for a few moments, then added, very solemnly, "But I 'll never be freen's again wi' Mistress Gairdner—no' if she wis to gang on her bendit knees! I 'm jist tellin' ye."

"I doot she 'll be gey ashamed o' hersel' the day," observed Mrs. Munro, and proceeded to change the subject—but soon reverted to it, for, after a hasty glance out of the window, she drew back hastily, exclaiming, "Weel, I never! If it 's no' jist hersel' comin' up the street!"

"Eh! Whit d' ye say?"

"I 'm sayin' I seen Mistress Gairdner comin' up the street. Wull she be comin' here, think ye?"

"She 'll no' get in this hoose, onywey!" cried the hostess, excitedly. She 'll be in the close noo, but she can I warrant ye!" And Mrs. M'Lerie peeped cautiously from the window. "I canna see her. I doot she 's comin'. She 'll be in the close noo, but she can ring, an' ring, an' ring, but I 'll no' open the door to her."

"Maybe she 's comin' to say she 's sorry."

"Weel, she can say that at the key-hole. If she comes to the door, me an' you 'll never let on we 're in the hoose."

"There she is," whispered Mrs. Munro, as a timid tinkle was heard.

Mrs. M'Lerie pursed her lips.

"I doot she 's awfu' ashamed," said Mrs. Munro, softly.

A minute passed, and they heard another little ring. They looked at each other awhile.

"She 'll be gaun awa' noo," said Mrs. Munro, at last.

"Let her gang!"

The bell rang a third time.

"Aw, Mistress M'Lerie," said her friend, "ye sud let her in."

"Na!"

"Aw, but wis it no' her that knittit thon rale fine wee shawley fur yer son John's wee lassie?"

Mrs. M'Lerie's face changed instantly.

"My! If I hadna furgot!" And she hurried from the parlor.

She was too late. Her visitor had gone. She returned to the parlor with tears in her eyes; then suddenly flung open the window and bawled:

"Come back, Mistress Gairdner, come back!"

VIII

THE JUMBLE SALE

"I NEVER gaed to a jungle sale afore," remarked Mrs. M'Lerie, as she and her friend, each dressed in her best, stepped out of the close into the street, which was bright with the afternoon sunshine.

"Weel, it 's no' the first time I 've been at a *jumble* sale," returned Mrs. Munro, smiling. "No' that I 'm whit ye micht ca' a frequenter o' jumble sales," she added. "But whiles ye get a bargain, an'—"

"Ye 're shair there 's no' gaun to be ony rattles, Mistress Munro?" Mrs. M'Lerie interrupted anxiously.

"Na, na. I tell't ye afore there wud

be nae *raffles,* so ye needna be feart, Mistress M'Lerie. Yer man cudna ha'e ony objections at ye gaun to the jumble sale. It 's a' square an' fair, an' there's naebody 'll ask ye to buy a pig in a poke."

"I 'm gled o' that, Mistress Munro, I 'm gled o' that. Faur be it frae me to say that rattles isna workit honestlike, but I aye ha'e ma doots; ay, I ha'e ma doots. As ye ken, I wis yinst catched wi' a tucket fur an organ, an' I 'm no' gaun to be catched again. Na!" And Mrs. M'Lerie pursed her lips and nodded her head solemnly three times.

Mrs. Munro checked the laugh that came with the recollection of the organ ticket, and proceeded to describe what her uninitiated companion was likely to see in the church hall, towards which they were wending their way.

"Ye see," she said, "a jumble sale is a vera different thing to a bazaur. Near

a' the things at the bazaur is new; but a' the things at a jumble sale is auld! 'Deed, ay! Some o' them 's gey auld! . . . But ithers is no' that auld. Gentry folk is no' needin' to wear holes in their claes, an' I 've seen rale nice-like things gaun dirt-chape. I mind the last sale I wis at—na, I 'm wrang; it wis the yin afore. Weel, there wis a young leddy 's hat—a beautiful hat!—an' it wis nae stranger to me, fur the young leddy—she 's Miss Smith, Doctor Smith's dochter—sits in oor kirk, no' faur frae whaur we sit. Aw, it wis a beautiful hat, a' trimmed wi' roses, rid yins an' yella yins an' bew—na! there wisna ony bew yins. An' whit d'ye think it wis priced at the jumble sale? Whit d'ye think, Mistress M'Lerie?"

"I 'm shair I cudna guess, Mistress Munro."

Mrs. Munro drew a long breath.

"May I dee this vera meenit," she said, solemnly, "if the beautiful hat wisna priced *tippence!* . . . Tippence!"

"Weel, I never!"

"That wis the price! An' I wudna wunner if it cost Miss Smith near ten shullin's when it wis new. An' there it wis priced *tippence!*"

"Did ye buy it?" inquired Mrs. M'Lerie.

"Na. It wis nae use to me. But I 'm jist tellin' ye the hale story to let ye see hoo things whiles gangs dirt-chape at jumble sales. An' mind ye, I 've heard o' folk buyin' auld things fur hauf naethin', an' sellin' them efter fur five pound—ay, an' ten pound!"

"It bates a'! Whit kin' o' things, Mistress Munro?"

"Picturs, an' clocks, an' cheeny, an' ither things that 's aulder nor they 're bonnie. I mind hearin' o' a wife wha

ocht a pictur fur a shullin'. The gless wis broke, an' she tuk it to a man fur to get a new gless. An' whinever the man seen the pictur he speirt if she wud sell it. An' she wis jist gaun to say, 'Hauf-a-croon,' when he said, 'Five pound.' An' she got the 'five pound.' Ay! that wis a bargain fur ye, Mistress M'Lerie!"

"An'—an' wull they be sellin' picturs at the jungle sale the day?" Mrs. M'Lerie asked breathlessly.

"Ah, but ye mauna be lukin' fur a five-pound pictur at every jumble sale," said her friend, smiling. "Na, na! Ye see, it 's jist a chance in a hunner thoosan'."

"Mphm!" muttered Mrs. M'Lerie, disappointed, and a little ashamed of her eagerness. "I 'm thinkin' there a guid bit o' rattlin' wi' anither name at yer jungle sale."

"Hoots, toots! Ye 're no' to say that,

Mistress M'Lerie. As I said afore, it 's a' square an' fair."

"I ha'e ma doots, Mistress Munro, I ha'e ma doots."

"Aweel, ye 'll shin be there, an' ye 'll see it a' fur yersel'. . . . Ye dinna need to buy onythin' unless ye like."

"Are ye gaun to buy onythin' yersel'?" asked Mrs. M'Lerie, regaining her good humor.

"Weel, I wis thinkin' o' buyin' a fender if I cud get yin aboot fowerpence."

"A fender fur fowerpence!"

"Jist that! I 've seen fenders gaun fur less. Of coorse, they 're gey sair bashed an' roostit. But it 's wunnerfu' whit ye can dae wi' elbow-greese."

"Fine I ken that, Mistress Munro, fine I ken that! But a fender fur fowerpence! I never heard the like!"

"Aw, that 's naethin' to whit ye 'll see afore ye 're dune. Mind, if ye 're

wantin' to buy onythin', dinna gi'e the leddies a' they ask. If they ask a shullin' say ye 'll gi'e saxpence, an' ye 'll likely get the thing fur ninepence."

"But I thocht the money wis fur the kirk," said Mrs. M'Lerie, looking thoughtful.

"Ay, it 's fur the kirk. But a bargain 's a bargain. . . But here we are," said Mrs. Munro.

"Is this the place? You gang furrit, Mistress Munro. . . . My! whit a crood o' folk!"

"Ye sud see it at nicht," returned her friend. "Some sales has an auction at nicht, and, I can tell ye, it 's a sicht! But I dinna like the auction business masel'. I aye buy things I dinna want. I yinst got landit wi' a spy-gless that naebody cud see through. I 'm shair I dinna ken to this day whit I bocht it fur, an' ma man lauchs at me yet. . . .

But we best tak' a luk roon' afore the crood gets bigger. Come awa', Mistress M'Lerie. Dinna be feart."

. . . . . .

It was an hour and a half later. The two friends, who had lost each other for a portion of the period, met beside a group of chairs, all of which were more or less worn and damaged.

"Is this whaur ye 've been a' this time?" Mrs. Munro inquired solicitously, "I 'm shair ye 're wearit."

"I 'm that warm! I aye get that warm when I 'm in a crood. So I jist said to masel' I wud wait here, an' ha'e a sate. But they wudna let me sit doon unless I bocht the chair."

"Wha wudna let ye sit doon?" demanded Mrs. Munro, almost fiercely, glowering at some ladies in the neighborhood.

"Aw, I cudna tell ye that noo. . . .

Never heed. I 'm no' as warm as I wis, an' I 'm rale gled to see ye again."

"Wis ye feart?"

"Och, I 'm no' that easy feart. Did ye buy a fender?"

Mrs. Munro shook her head. "The fenders I seen wisna worth takin' awa'. I never seen sic like fenders! An' they wadna sell yin unner saxpence. Some folk ha'e an' awfu' neck!"

"Weel," said Mrs. M'Lerie, "I 'm vexed ye didna get a fender. Wis there naethin' else ye wis wantin'?"

"Na. Everythin' 's ower dear the day. I 'll maybe come back the morn when the sellin' folk ha'e gotten some o' the consate ta'en oot o' them. I think we 'll jist gang noo."

"I—I was thinkin'," began Mrs. M'Lerie, and paused.

"Eh?"

"It wis—it wis a wee chair I seen in

the corner thonder—a wee chair, ye ken—" and she paused again.

"Are ye wantin' to buy a chair?" said Mrs. Munro. "Ye 're no' needin' a chair, are ye?"

"It wis a *wee* chair, Mistress Munro!"

"Oh, I see! Fur yer son John's wee lassie?"

"Jist that. Aw, ye never seen a bonnier wean! Ye never—"

"An' whaur 's the chair?"

Mrs. M'Lerie sighed. "It wis ower dear. They wantit fower-an'-sax, an' I hadna that on me."

"Did ye no' bate them doon?"

"Aweel, ye see I 've jist hauf-a-croon in ma purse."

"I 'll len' ye the money, an' welcome," said Mrs. Munro, kindly. "Maybe I 'll be able to bate them doon a saxpence, onywey."

"Ye 're awfu' kind!" said Mrs. M'Lerie, gratefully.

"Havers! I 'm rale gled I didna spend ma money. Whaur 's the chair?"

Mrs. M'Lerie conducted her friend to where she had left the wee chair.

"It 's awa'!" she exclaimed, suddenly depressed.

"Shairly no'!" cried her companion, hopefully.

But on inquiry they found that the wee chair had been sold five minutes previously.

"It wis the nicest wee chair ye ever seen. Jist the thing for ma son John's wee lassie when she 's a bit bigger. Sirs, the day!"

"Never heed, Mistress M'Lerie, never heed."

But Mrs. M'Lerie was inconsolable. "I had set ma he'rt on it. It wis that like the yin John had—it wis stolen at the flittin', an' I wis sair vexed. An' I thocht I wis gaun to get yin to tak' its place, an' noo—"

"Come awa' hame wi' me, an' ha'e a dish o' tea," interposed Mrs. Munro, and led away her old friend, who continued to mourn over her disappointment.

Even the dish of tea did not cheer as it was wont to do, and Mrs. Munro began to get desperate in her efforts at comfort. But at last she succeeded.

"Efter a', Mistress M'Lerie," she said softly, "ye micht no' ha'e been as pleased wi' the chair if ye had gotten it. I dinna think ye wud ha'e liket gi'ein' it to yer son John's wee lassie."

"Whit wey that?"

"Weel, ye see, ye wud aye be remindit that ye had bocht it at a jumble sale; an' a jumble sale 's a' vera weel fur buyin' fenders an' things fur yersel', but it 's different fur buyin' a present."

"But—"

"Of coorse, it 's fur yersel' to decide,

but if I wis buyin' a wee chair, I wudna—"

"Ye wudna buy it at a jungle sale?"

Mrs. Munro shook her head impressively, and said firmly, "No, if I got it fur naethin'!"

Mrs. M'Lerie thought for nearly two minutes. "Weel, maybe ye 're richt," she admitted.

"An' I wis gaun to say that ye cud easy get a wee chair made. I ken a man that wudna chairge mair nor the cost, him an' me bein' auld freen's. An' ye cud get the wee lassie's name carvit on it, an'—"

"Aw, Mistress Munro!" cried Mrs. M'Lerie, in a burst of delight.

IX

MRS. M'LERIE'S COAST VISIT

"AN' ye gaed doon the watter yer lane, Mistress M'Lerie?" said Mrs. Munro, looking at her friend in surprise.

"Ay," returned Mrs. M'Lerie, laying down her cup. "But if I wis leevin' to be a centurion I wud never gang ma lane again."

"Ye mean a centenary—yin that leeves to be a hunner year auld."

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. An', as I wis sayin', I—"

"But I thocht ye wis gaun wi' yer man."

"So I wis; but he cam' hame on Set-

terday nicht—he wis workin' late, ye ken—an' tell't me he wud ha'e to gang to his work jist the same as usual on the Monday, fur Maister Paurley 's gettin' new ingynes or somethin', an' he wantit to ha'e a crack wi' ma man, him bein' foresman, when the works wis emp'y on the holiday."

"Yer man 's gey chief wi' Maister Paurley," remarked Mrs. Munro.

"Ay, he 's a' that. But that 's no' whit I wis gaun fur to tell ye. When he said he wud ha'e to be at his work jist the same as usual, I said I wisna heedin' aboot gaun to see Maister an' Mistress Duncan at Kirn, an'—"

"I aye thocht the Duncans bidet at Dunune."

"Weel, their hoose is aboot hauf roads atween the twa places, an' they 've got 'Kirn' prentit on their writin'-paper. I dinna see whit odds it mak's, but Mis-

tress Duncan aye checks folk fur sayin' she bides in Dununе."

"I 'm thinkin' her an' her man ha'e fleed up a bit since I seen them last. Prentit writin'-paper! Ma certy!"

"Aw, ye see, Mistress Munro, it wis a guid hantle o' money Maister Duncan cam' in fur, furbye the hoose at Dununе—I mean Kirn. An' ye canna keep folk frae gettin' a wee stylish-like when they get money wi'oot ony strivin'."

"Maybe. But—but prentit writin'-paper! It bates a'! Whit color wis it prentit?"

"Bew,—oh, a rale bonnie color! Mistress Duncan tell't me hersel' she thocht it wis rale tastey. An' she 's got a bew phonograph prentit on her envelopes."

"Whit? A bew whit?"

"Weel, I—I think she ca'ed it phonograph, but maybe I 'm wrang.

Onywey, it wis a 'Jy' an' a 'D' a' mixed up wi' wee curly-wurlies."

"Aw, ye mean a monogram, Mistress M'Lerie. My! sic vanity! I 'm shair I hope it 's no' the pride afore the fa'!"

"Och, I dinna think it 's as bad 's a' that, Mistress Munro, I dinna think it 's as bad 's a' that!" said Mrs. M'Lerie, leniently. "I canna say I like Mistress Duncan jist as weel 's I liket her afore the money cam', fur I never feel whit ye wud ca' at hame in her hoose noo. But maybe that 's mair ma fau't nor hers, fur ma man an' hers is rale pack."

"Aweel, faur be it frae me to judge ma fella human bein's, but I maun say I canna thole seein' plain folk tryin' fur to be gentry. It gets ma dander up, Mistress M'Lerie. But I 'll say nae mair aboot it—no' anither word wull I say, supposin' it wis ma last—excep'

that I wudna be surprised to see Mistress Duncan get a fa' yet."

"Aw, but ye needna be that sair on the wumman, Mistress Munro, ye needna be that sair. Naebody kens whit siller can dae till they get it."

"I 'm shair I never said a word ag'in' Mistress Duncan. . . . But ye wis gaun to tell me aboot yer jaunt, Mistress M'Lerie," said Mrs. Munro, realizing suddenly that her friend might, after all, be aware of the fact that many years ago she had refused to marry the then poor, but now plutocratic, Jamie Duncan.

"Aboot the jaunt," said Mrs. M'Lerie, agreeably. "Ay, I 'll tell ye aboot the jaunt, an' welcome. As I tell't ye, I said to ma man I didna want to gang ma lane, but he said he thocht I sud gang an' no' disappint wur auld freen's; so I said I wud gang, but I wud sail frae the Brimalaw, fur I dinna like the

rinnin' frae the train to the boat, an' I 'm aye feart fur gettin' on the wrang boat an' gettin' tooken awa' to Cam'eltown or Dublin, or some o' thae faur-awa' places. But he said I maun gang in the train, fur he thocht I micht get cauld on the lang sail."

"'Deed, ye 've a kind man, Mistress M'Lerie," her friend observed.

"Ay, he 's kind, fur a' that folk ca's him stric'. But I wantit the lang sail, an' efter a bit argle-bargle he said I wis to please masel', but I maun tak' a piece wi' me. So I gaed off early i' the mornin', an' catched the boat at the Brimalaw—but, aw! Mistress Munro, it wisna like gaun doon the watter when you an' me wis young. Na! it wisna like it ava'. D' ye mind the boats—the *Rothesay Castle*, an' the *Ruby*, an' the *Kelpie*, an' the *Spunkie*, an' the *Lady Brisbane*, an'—"

"Fine!" said Mrs. Munro, with enthusiasm. "But times ha'e changed. Nooadays the captains is that prood, they 're aye lukin' efter the boat an' no' carin' a hate fur the folk!"

"'Deed, ay! They 're aye up on thon shelf, an' they wudna fash theirsel's to come roon' fur the siller. It 's no' freen'ly like, Mistress Munro, it 's no' freen'ly like. I mind when the captains cam' roon' wi' a tin boax fu' o' tuckets, as much as to say they wis gled to see ye. But noo ye 've got to speir fur yer tucket at a wee keek-hole, frae a young man in a skippit bunnet, an' rale genteel."

"An' did ye get doon to Dununе a' richt?" inquired Mrs. Munro, fearing lest her friend should get lost in side issues.

"Ay, I got doon a' richt to Dununе. The boat I gaed wi' didna stope at Kirn,

an' I doot Mistress Duncan wis a wee thing pit oot at ha'ein' to meet me at Dunune. But she didna say a word, an' we set oot fur 'Elizabethvile.' "

"Fur whit?"

"Fur 'Elizabethvile.' That 's the name o' the hoose. Mistress Duncan's name 's Elizabeth, ye ken; but I didna like to ask whit wey they ca'ed the hoose 'vile.' "

" 'Vile' is the German fur 'hoose,' " Mrs. Munro informed her friend. "But, oh! the consate to ca' the hoose efter her! . . . An' whit wis the hoose like, Mistress M'Lerie?"

"It 's a braw hoose. I never wis in sic a braw hoose. My! ye sud ha'e seen the waux-cloth, no' to mention the carpets. Ay, an' on the door-step they 've got a gutty bass wi' their name on 't! An' I wisht ye seen the vazes in the paurlor, an' the alabaster ornaments in

the dinin'-room, an' the harmonium, an' the servant lassie, an' the gairden, an' the miranda, an'—"

"Veranda, ye mean."

"An' the dinner—och, I smelt it when I wis sittin' wi' Mistress Duncan in the paurlor; and I says to her, says I, 'Ye 've shairly gotten sheep's heid the day. I wisht ma man wis here.' But she didna seem to hear me. An' then we had wur dinner, an' I wis near stupefied wi' the number o' different things. D'ye ken this, Mistress Munro? Frae the stairt to the feenish I filled nae less nor sax plates! Ay, I did that! An' when the servant lassie wis gi'ein' me an aipple, I says to her, says I, 'Ye 'll ha'e an awfu' washin' efter this!' An' if ye 'll believe me, Mistress Munro, she drappit a' the aipples on the flure, an' a dish o' bananas furbye. I tell't the lassie I wis rale vexed, but she didna say ony-

thin', and Mistress Duncan got awfu' rid, but didna say onythin', either."

"Did ye get ony wine?" inquired Mrs. Munro.

" 'Deed, ay! I had a wee drappie port—vera nice, indeed; vera nice, indeed. Mistress Duncan tell't me efter, it cost her man two shullin's the bottle, takin' a dizzen! There no' mony cud afford that!"

"An' whit did ye dae efter ye had gotten yer denner?"

"We gaed into the paurlor an' had a crack, an' then we gaed ootbye an' had a bit daunner, an' then we cam' back an' had a dish o' tea—it wisna vera guid tea—an' then it wis time fur me to gang fur ma boat. Mistress Duncan tell't me I wud get a boat at the Kirn pier, an' so we gaed there. But we had an awfu' rin fur't, an' she got that bad pechin' she had to

gi'e up, an' I tore doon the pier masel', an' jist wun on board in time. There wis that few folk on the boat, it didna seem like a boat gaun up to Glesca on a holiday efternune. An' in a wee I seen we wis gaun stracht for Dunune, an' I gaed to the wee keek-hole whaur they sell the tuckets, an' speirt o' the young man in the skippit bunnet when we wud be at the Brimalaw. 'Brimalaw!' says he. 'We 've never been there yet. An' we 're gaun to Rothesay the noo!' ''

"Weel, weel!" ejaculated Mrs. Munro.

"Weel, I suppose he seen I wis fair dumfoonert, fur he cam' oot his wee hoose, an' clappit ma shouther, an' said I needna get excitet, fur a' I had to dae wis to get aff his boat at Dunune, an' get on to anither that wud come in aboot five meenits. Aw, he wis a rale nice young man, an' I wis that thenkfu', fur I thocht I wis dune fur. An' when we got to Dunune, he tell't a man on the

pier to see that I got the richt boat. An' so at last I wun hame, sair wearit, but that thenkfu' fur ma narra escape. If it hadna been fur the young man—pursuer, I think they ca'ed him on the boat—guid kens whaur I wud be noo."

"The young man wud be the purser."

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. Onywey, I 'm tellin' ye he wis rale kind to an auld wife."

"Ay. But I 'm thinkin' ye 've Mistress Duncan to thenk fur a' yer trouble, Mistress M'Lerie."

"Toots! I dinna think that."

"But she sudna ha'e let ye tak' the wrang boat."

"Aw, it wisna her fau't, Mistress Munro, it wisna her fau't."

"Maybe no', maybe no'," returned her friend, solemnly. "But I cudna trust onybody that has bew—"

A ring at the bell prevented the remark being finished.

X

THE CANARY

"MERCY me!" exclaimed Mrs. Munro, entering her friend's parlor, "ye 've a fire on the day!"

"Ay," returned Mrs. M'Lerie, "I pit yer chair ower at the winda, fur I wis feart ye wud fin' it ower warm."

The visitor took the chair, and, unfolding a clean handkerchief, mopped her forehead.

"It 's gey warm the day," remarked the hostess, who looked as if she had been boiled alive.

"Is yer kitchen biler brustit that ye 've a fire in the paurlor, Mistress M'Lerie?" Mrs. Munro inquired with a gasp.

Mrs. M'Lerie shook her head.

"Wud ye no' open the winda?" said the other in astonishment.

"Na, na!" cried Mrs. M'Lerie, hastily. "We mauna open the winda, Mistress Munro."

"Ha'e ye gotten the cauld?" came the anxious inquiry. "'Deed, I 'm sair vexed if ye 've gotten the—"

"Na; it 's no' that," replied Mrs. M'Lerie, smiling faintly; "but, ye see, I 've gotten a—a bird."

"A whit?"

"A bird—a canary."

"A canary—whaur?"

"In the corner, thonder." Mrs. M'Lerie pointed to the far corner of the parlor, where, on the floor, in its wire cage, a canary was perched, silent and disconsolate-looking.

"An' whaur got ye the canary, Mistress M'Lerie?" inquired her friend, rising to go over and inspect the bird.

"Weel, ye see, it wis this wey," said Mrs. M'Lerie, following her. "Ma auld freen' Mistress Forgie cam' to me aboot this time yesterday wi' the cage in her haun' an' a bew tidy wi' yella spotes happit roon the cage, an' she says to me, says she, 'I 've a great favour to ask ye, Mistress M'Lerie.' . . . 'It 's grantit,' says I. Fur, ye see, she 's an auld freen' o' mines. 'Ay, it 's grantit afore ye ask it,' I says to her, fur I seen she wis kin' o' pit aboot. . . . 'Weel,' she says to me, says she, 'wull ye tak' ma wee canary, an' be kind to him when I 'm awa'?' An' she begood to greet saft-like. . . . 'Hoots, toots!' says I, tryin' no' to luk frichtit, 'ye 're no' to be speakin' that wey, Mistress Forgie. I never seen ye lukin' better. . . . 'Aw, I didna mean that,' she says. 'I thocht ye kent I wis leavin', Mistress M'Lerie.' . . . ''Deed, ay! I can see ye 're leevin'

wi' hauf an e'e,' says I, 'an' I hope I 'll see the same fur mony a lang year.' . . . 'But I 'm leavin' Glesca the morn, fur guid,' she says, dichtin' her e'en. . . . An' then I mindit that her man had gotten a premotion to a fine job in Belfast. 'Weel, weel,' I says to her, says I, 'I 'm shair I beg yer paurdon, Mistress Forgie. I didna ken ye wis fur aff as quick as a' that.' . . . 'It 's shinner nor I expectit masel', to tell ye the honest truth,' says she; 'but Samuel 's got his orders, an' we maun gang the morn's mornin'. An' I want ye to tak' the canary, fur Samuel 'll no' let me keep mair nor three in Belfast, an' be kind to the wee thing fur yer auld freen's sake.' An' she grat gey sair, fur I 'm thinkin' she wis unco sweirt to pairt wi' yin o' her birds. . . . Aweel, I didna ken whit to say, fur I never had ony birds in ma hoose but thur''—Mrs. M'Lerie indi-

cated the case of stuffed birds at the window—"and I kent as muckle as a waux feegure aboot keepin' leevin' birds. But puir Mistress Forgie said she cudna trust it till onybody else in the warl', an' she said it wud be a fine pet fur ma son John's wee lassie when she growed up a bit—an'—an'—weel, Mistress Munro, I tuk the bird frae her—and there it is to prove ma words."

"Ay, I see the bird," said Mrs. Munro, while her friend paused for breath.

"Weel, I tuk the bird, as ye see," continued Mrs. M'Lerie, "but I tell't Mistress Forgie she wud ha'e to tell me whit to dae wi' the puir wee thing, fur I didna want it to dee if I cud help it. Mistress Forgie stoppit greetin', an', efter a dish o' tea, tell't me a' I wis to dae, an' said she wud send me a bookie aboot canaries as shin as she got to Bel-

fast. No' that I 'm heedin' aboot the bookie, fur I doot it 'll jist pit ma heid in a bizz, an' it 's in a bad enough bizz the noo, guid kens."

"But she wud gi'e ye suffeecient instructions fur the time bein', as it were," put in Mrs. Munro.

Mrs. M'Lerie shook her head despondently. "I thocht that last nicht, but noo I canna mind hauf the things she tell't me, an' the ither hauf 's gotten near a' mixty-maxty. When I wis gettin' ready ma man's breakfast in the mornin', I wis sayin' ower a' the things to masel', an' I thocht I wis gettin' on fine, but I drappit a fresh egg in the jaw-box, an' it slippit awa' doon the holes afore ye cud say 'Jack Robi'son!'—an' it jist seemed as if ma mem'ry slippit alang wi' 't, fur efter that I wis fair stupit. An' then, when I gaed to luk efter the puir wee canary, I cud

hardly mind a thing, and I near gaed dementit!"

"But did ye no' mind onythin' ava'?" Mrs. Munro inquired.

"I 'm thenkfu' to say I did mind twa-three things, an' I hope they 'll keep the puir bit birdie leevin' till ma man comes hame, an' then I 'll send him oot to see if he canna fin' a freen' that kens aboot canaries. I 'm rale gled ye cam' in the day, Mistress Munro, fur I cudna leave the hoose. Ma man tell't me he thocht the meenister micht come the day."

"I 'm shair I 'm gled to keep ye comp'ny, Mistress M'Lerie, but I 'm vexed I canna help ye wi' the bird. Phoo! but it 's that warm in here!" The exclamation was involuntary.

"I wud tak' ye ben to the kitchen, but I 'm feart to leave the canary, Mistress Munro, I 'm feart to leave the canary."

"Aw, never heed. I 'm no' com-

plainin'. . . . But ha'e ye dune onythin' fur the bird the day? ''

''Oh, ay. I 've dune a wheen things. I 'm shair I hope I 've no' dune onythin' wrang. . . . I gi'ed it fresh watter an' fresh seed—Mistress Forgie gi'ed me a poke o' seed—an' a screw-nail, an'—''

''A whit?''

''A screw-nail, Mistress Munro, a screw-nail. Mistress Forgie said I wis to gi'e it a screw-nail in its seed.''

''Whit's that fur?''

''Ye may speir, but I canna answer. But I gi'ed it a big yin oot the snib o' the kitchen press, fur I thocht if I gi'ed it a wee yin it micht try to swallow it an' get chokit.''

''Dis it eat the nail?'' inquired Mrs. Munro, gazing at the canary with profound curiosity. ''I yinst seen a black man eatin' gless in a penny show,

but I never heard tell o' birds eatin' nails."

"It bates me," said Mrs. M'Lerie. "I canna unnerstaun' it. But I can tell ye the nail 's jist the same as it wis when I pit it in the seed at nine o'clock."

"Maybe it eats the nail through the nicht. . . . An' whit mair did ye dae, Mistress M'Lerie?"

"I mindit yin thing as weel as I mind ma name, onywey," said the other, with a little satisfaction in her voice. "I mindit that the canary wis never to get cauld nor sit in a draught." And she hastened to stir and replenish the fire.

"But is 't no' ower dark fur a bird in the corner?"

"It 's maybe a wee thing dark, but it 's safe, Mistress Munro, it 's safe, I warrant ye! Ye see, the chiffoneer keeps back the draught frae the door. I 'm jist daein' whit I wis tell't to dae."

"But ye aye see birds sittin' near windas."

"Maybe ye 're richt. But I 'll ha'e to get ma winda made tichter afore ma canary sits there. An' whaur wud I pit ma ither birds?" asked Mrs. M'Lerie, suddenly, referring to the case of stuffed ones. "It 's mony a year since they sat there the first time. Na, na; I cudna pit awa' ma ither birds."

"But ye cud hing the canary abin yer ither birds wi' a string, cud ye no', Mistress M'Lerie?"

"An' supposin' the string wis to break, whaur wud ma ither birds be?"

Mrs. Munro could not refrain from laughing, though the drops came out on her forehead with the effort. "Oh, my! Mistress M'Lerie! Oh, my! . . . An' whit aboot the puir wee canary?"

Mrs. M'Lerie looked the least thing offended. "Auld freen's comes first,"

she muttered. Then her expression changed. "Weel, weel, Mistress Munro, the string 's no' a bad notion, but it 'll ha'e to be a strong bit. But I 'll need to get ower the draught first."

"It 's a guid thing yer ither birds canna be hurtit wi' draughts," Mrs. Munro observed, smiling.

"Aweel, ye see, they 're in a gless case —Tits! that wis a daft-like thing to say! Of coorse, ma ither birds is different to the canary." And Mrs. M'Lerie laughed at herself. . . . "But, ye ken, Mistress Munro," she added, with sudden solemnity, "it 's whiles jist as if ma ither birds wis leevin'. Ma he'rt 's that set on them."

"'Deed, ay," said Mrs. Munro, sympathetically. "But yer canary 's unco quate," she went on. "Has it no' been singin' the day?"

"Never a cheep," her friend returned,

looking troubled again. "An' I hivna been oot the room abin twa meenits at a time the hale day. I had to gang to the door twa-three times, an' to the kitchen fur a bit piece fur masel' and coals fur the fire—but that wis a'."

"I think I 've heard that birds winna sing when they dinna get licht. An' it 's gey dark in the corner thonder." Mrs. Munro had returned to her seat at the window.

"Weel, I 'm shair I dinna ken whit to dae. If I gi'e it licht, I 'm feart it gets cauld; an' if I keep it warm, it 'll no' sing. There 's naethin' as bad as bein' in a state o' incision, as I yinst heard a meenister sayin'. Ay, an'—"

"Ye mean *indecision,* Mistress M'Lerie?"

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. . . . That 's the state I 'm in. . . . But I 'll say this, Mistress Munro, I 'll say this—it 's

faur better fur ma wee canary to be dumb nor deid."

"That 's true. But I doot it 's a bad sign it no' singin'. . . . Ye micht try cheepin' at its cage."

Mrs. M'Lerie knelt down and "cheeped" till she had no breath left, but the canary, after hopping to the remotest spar, regarded her with a beady eye, and made not the slightest response.

"I doot yer bird's no' weel," said Mrs. Munro, gently.

Mrs. M'Lerie rose to her feet, panting. Her face was miserable. "Whit am I to dae?" she cried at last. "I 'm no' wantin' it to dee."

Mrs. Munro gazed helplessly out of the window.

"Whit am I to dae?" repeated her hostess, wildly. "I 'm shair I wisht I—"

Just then Mrs. Munro jumped up.

"There the meenister comin'. I maun gang," she exclaimed.

"Rest ye, rest ye," said Mrs. M'Lerie, hurrying to the case of stuffed birds and wiping a speck of dust from the glass.

"I dinna want to see him the day," whispered her friend, hurriedly. "Ma man 's no' been at the kirk fur fower Sawbaths. I maun gang. I 'll try an' jink him in the close. I 'll see ye the morn." And Mrs. Munro fled from the house.

Mrs. M'Lerie had no time to argue, as the fireside required sweeping, and the tidy had slipped from the back of the best easy-chair—the chair wherein the minister would sit. So she busied herself, casting many an anxious glance at the canary.

But the minister was longer in coming than she expected. . . .

When she did open the door to him his smile was even brighter than usual.

"And how are you to-day, Mrs. M'Lerie?" he asked pleasantly. Then he laughed. "And how is your canary? I 'm very fond of canaries myself, and— and I happened to meet Mrs. Munro a minute ago." . . .

Sometimes the ministerial visit *is* welcome.

XI

A DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

"ONYBODY that seen ye the noo wud think it was the Queen hersel' that wis comin' to see ye the day," remarked Mrs. Munro, pausing in dusting a pea-green vase on her old friend's mantelpiece.

"Weel, I 'm aboot dune noo," said Mrs. M'Lerie, as she rose panting from the floor, where she had been fiercely polishing a leg of the parlor table. "An' ye wudna ha'e me bring a bonny young leddy like Miss Paurley intil a dirty hoose, wud ye, Mistress Munro?"

" 'Deed, no! Ye ken fine I wudna. But ye 're no' expec'in' Miss Paurley to admire hersel' in the legs o' the table, are ye?"

"Ah, but I canna thole mahogany that disna shine," said Mrs. M'Lerie, smiling good-humoredly. "An' I 'm unco obleeged to ye fur helpin' me, Mistress Munro."

"Toots, wumman! Ye 're welcome. But to tell ye the solemn truth, I 've dustit fur near an' 'oor, an' I 've never seen a speck o' dust. Whit wis the last time ye dustit yer paurlor, Mistress M'Lerie? It wisna a week syne, I warrant ye."

"Och, weel, I gi'ed it a kin' o' bit dust this mornin', but I thocht I micht ha'e missed twa-three things. Ye see, I 'll maybe never see Miss Paurley again —efter she 's mairrit."

"Whit wey that? She 's shairly no' leavin' Glasca."

"Ay, is she. She 's gaun awa' to furrin pairts wi' her man."

"Dae ye tell me that? An' whaur 's

she gaun, dae ye ken, Mistress M'Lerie? I daursay ye wud hear a' aboot it frae yer man, him bein' Maister Paurley's foresman."

"Jist that. I whiles hear things that naebody else hears. Ma man 's in a vera important an' confeedential poseetion. Ay, I whiles hear—"

"An' whaur did ye say Miss Paurley wis gaun?"

"To—to Hangshy. I think that 's whit they ca'ed it."

Mrs. Munro shook her head. "I never heard tell o' sic a place. Whaur is it? "

"I dinna ken, I 'm shair."

"Is 't aboot Jamaicy?"

"I 've tell't ye a' I can, Mistress Munro, I 've tell't ye a' I can. But I maun ha'e a rub at the legs o' the easy-chair." And Mrs. M'Lerie took a few steps, fell on her knees, and began polishing as if for dear life.

"As the folk that mak' the sape says, cleenliness is next to godliness," observed Mrs. Munro. "See an' no' rub the leg awa' a' thegither. Ye wud be sair affrontit if ye ha' to offer Miss Paurley a chair wantin' a leg."

"Ye 're the yin fur yer bit joke," said the hostess, laughing. "But I 'm dune noo. . . . Jist wait till I gi'e a dicht to the birds." She breathed pantingly on the glass case containing the stuffed birds, and then polished vigorously. "I think that 'll dae noo," she said at last. "I 'll awa' an' get tidied. Ye 'll excuse me fur five meenits, Mistress Munro."

"Certainly," said her friend, agreeably. "I 'll jist ha'e a keek at the 'Sunday Sentinel' till ye 're ready. There wis an awfu' excitin' story in the last yin ye lent me. But it stoppit awfu' abrupt-like, wi' the bad villian stabbin'

wur hero an' loupin' ower a precipice, haudin' the lovely young hero-ine in a mad embrace. My! it wis rale sensational!"

"Ah, but wur hero wisna stabbit in a vittal pairt, an' the young hero-ine wisna kilt, fur she fell on the tap o' the villian, an' he wis gey sair hurt an' gaed humphy-backit fur the rest o' his days. But he reformed an' leeved happy ever efter! Ye 'll get it a' in the paper in yer haun, Mistress Munro."

"Thenk ye. But I doot ye 've spilet the story wi' tellin' me the end o' 't."

"Aw, I 'm a stupit buddy, Mistress Munro, I 'm a stupit buddy! But never heed! There a fine new story begins this week ca'ed 'Gory Gold; or, Fur Baby's Sake.' "

"Mphm! I 'll ha'e a read at that till ye snod yersel' up," said Mrs. Munro, settling down in a chair, with the "Sun-

day Sentinel," which Mrs. M'Lerie took in regularly.

. . . . . .

When the hostess returned, she found her friend just concluding the first instalment of "Gory Gold."

"Tits!" exclaimed the latter, irritably, "It jist feenishes at the maist excitin' bit! But whit extraor'inar' intellec's the folk maun ha'e that writes thae stories! I wis fair cairrit awa'!"

"An' it gars ye weary fur the next week," said Mrs. M'Lerie, sympathizingly.

"Mercy me!" cried Mrs. Munro, dropping the paper. "Are ye no' weel? Are ye feelin' cauld?"

"Cauld! I 'm fair bilin'."

"But ye 've gotten on a warm shawl."

"It 's the shawl I got in a present frae Miss Paurley," said Mrs. M'Lerie, proudly.

"Ay, I ken. But it 's no' the weather fur it ava'."

"Ye wudna ha'e Miss Paurley comin' to the hoose—maybe fur the last time—an' me no' wearin' the shawl she gi'ed me. Wud ye?"

"Weel, weel, I daursay ye 're richt," Mrs. Munro soothingly returned, although she felt that her old friend was the least thing ridiculous. "It 's a rale fine shawl," she added kindly.

"Ay, is it!" said Mrs. M'Lerie, a trifle shortly.

" An' it becomes ye unco weel."

Mrs. M'Lerie's little fit of annoyance passed, and she was about to compliment Mrs. Munro on her bonnet, when a ring at the door-bell prevented her, and threw her into a state of intense excitement.

"That 'll be *her!*" she said in a loud whisper. "I 'll awa' an' open the door. Oh, my! See, Mistress Munro, ye micht

pit awa' the 'Sentinel.' Stap it ablow the sofa. Thenk ye. Sirs, the day! I 'm that warm! An', oh, Mistress Munro, I 've fairgot to tak' the sugar-cookies oot the poke!"

"I 'll dae that fur ye. Awa' an' open the door," said Mrs. Munro, hurrying to the tea-table. "Weel, I never! If they 're no' jist plain cookies!"

"Whit 's that?" gasped the hostess, halting at the door.

"They 're no' sugar-cookies. The baker 's gi'ed ye the wrang kind. But never heed! Ye canna keep Miss Paurley stannin' ootside."

"But I tell't the man I wantit sugar-cookies," groaned the other, distractedly. "Fur I kent it wud maybe be the last time Miss Paurley wud come to—"

"Weel, weel, it canna be helpit noo. There 's the bell again!"

The poor hostess sighed miserably as

she proceeded to admit her guest, but began to brighten immediately pretty Miss Parley set foot in the narrow lobby, looking as if she were really pleased to find herself there.

"I 'm that glad ye 've came," said Mrs. M'Lerie, hospitably. "Come awa' ben an' rest ye. I 'm rale prood to see ye. . . . Ye ken Mistress Munro," she added as they entered the parlor. "Her an' me 's auld freen's."

"Of course I know Mrs. Munro," said Miss Parley, pleasantly, shaking hands with that lady, who, having dropped a cookie under the table and bumped her head in a vain effort to recover it, was considerably flustered. "I hope you are well, Mrs. Munro."

"Thenk ye kindly, Miss Paurley, I canna complain. Are ye haudin' weel yersel'?" returned Mrs. Munro, almost certain that her bonnet was off the

straight. "If ye 'll excuse me, I 'll awa' an' see if the kettle 's bilin'," she continued, and left the room hastily. It had been previously arranged that she should attend to the tea-making, so that the hostess could remain with the honored guest.

"I need n't ask how Mr. M'Lerie is," said Miss Parley, taking the proffered easy-chair, "for I 'd soon hear from father if there was anything wrong with him. But I 'm afraid you 've caught cold, Mrs. M'Lerie. A summer cold is a nasty thing, is n't it?"

"Na, na, I 've no' gotten the cauld," replied Mrs. M'Lerie, in some confusion. "But—but I aye like to be weel happit. An' hoo 's yer fayther? An' yer mither? An' yer brithers an' sisters?"

While Miss Parley was replying, Mrs. M'Lerie happened to glance at the tea-table, and a moment later uttered a horrified exclamation.

"What 's the matter?" asked the visitor, startled.

"Aw, naethin'—naethin' ava'. I—I 'm rale gled to hear ye 're a' weel. They 'll be gey vexed to think o' ye gettin' mairrit, are they no'?"

"Oh, I don't know about that, Mrs. M'Lerie," said Miss Parley, laughing. "One away won't make such a big difference."

"I kent a big difference when ma son John got mairrit,—a big difference. 'Deed, the mornin' efter he gaed awa' I bilet an egg fur him, an'—an' I near grat when I mindit he wisna there to eat it. But, of coorse, I had jist the yin bairn."

"Now you 've got two," remarked the girl, cheerily. "Because you 've got a little granddaughter. How is she? She must be getting a big girl."

"Aw, ye never seen the likes o' her, Miss Paurley, ye never seen the likes o'

her!" cried Mrs. M'Lerie, with a gush of delight. "Ye never seen a bonnier wee lassie. An' she 's that fat! My! it 's jist a treat to get haudin' her! An' she kens her grannie. Ay, she does that!" Fairly started on her favorite subject, Mrs. M'Lerie continued her eulogy till Mrs. Munro entered with the tea-pot.

Ten minutes later, when Miss Parley had asked and received a second cup of tea, to the intense gratification of her hostess, Mrs. Munro remarked:

"Mistress M'Lerie wis tellin' me ye wis gaun awa' to furrin pairts, Miss Paurley."

"Yes. We 're going to Shanghai for a few years, anyhow."

Mrs. Munro turned to Mrs. M'Lerie. "That wisna whit *you* ca'ed it," she said. "Ye said it wis Hangshy."

"Aweel, it 's a' yin," said Mrs. M'Le-

rie, who was again worrying over the fact that she had been swindled by the baker—and in more ways than one. Not only were the cookies wrong, but there was one short.

"Whaur aboots is Hang—I mean Shanghai?" inquired Mrs. Munro, who, noting the direction of her old friend's gaze, was also beginning to feel uncomfortable.

"It 's in China," replied Miss Parley. "Quite a lot of Scotch and English people live there."

"I thocht there wis naethin' but cannibals an' savage folk there. But I 'm rale gled to hear it 's no' the case," said Mrs. Munro.

"'Deed, ay!" said Mrs. M'Lerie, endeavoring to shake her mind free of the baker and his dishonesty. "Wull ye no' ha'e a cookie, Miss Paurley?" she inquired, presently presenting the plate.

Miss Parley took the cookie, although she did not want it.

"Pit plenty butter on 't," her hostess advised. "Ye see, thur cookies wis—wis a—a mistake. I ordered sugar-cookies, but—but—"

"Oh, but I like this kind far better. And they 're so nice and new, and the butter is so sweet." Miss Parley's little speech, even if it were mere politeness, deserves a better record than this.

And Mrs. Munro was not behindhand with her word of comfort. "I 'm jist o' the same opeenion," she observed firmly. "Sugar-cookies is jist fur weans. Try yin o' thur yersel', Mistress M'Lerie, an' ye 'll enjye it."

Miss Parley waited for half-an-hour, at the end of which time Mrs. M'Lerie had forgotten all her worry.

"Weel, I ken ye maun be unco busy the noo," said the latter. "An' it wis

rale kind o' ye to come to see an auld wife like me."

"You 've been very good to me," returned the girl. "Good-bye, Mrs. Munro."

Mrs. Munro had composed a little speech for the occasion, but all she said was: "Guid-bye, guid-bye to ye. I 'm gled there nae cannibals."

Mrs. M'Lerie accompanied her guest to the door, and there, with a sudden gulp, she whispered: "An' wull I—wull I never see ye again, Miss Paurley?"

Miss Parley smiled gently. "If—if you 'll come to the wedding you 'll see me then, Mrs. M'Lerie," she said shyly.

"The weddin'! . . . Me!" cried the old woman, in a flutter.

"Well, I hope you won't refuse the invitation when it comes to you next week." And then, as the situation was becoming awkward, Miss Parley made

a brief adieu and hurried down the stair.

It was several minutes before Mrs. M'Lerie could return to the parlor. Again and again she wiped her eyes, and again and again they filled.

"The daurlin'!" she repeated to herself. "The daurlin'!"

When at last she rejoined her old friend, the latter, very red in the face, said:

"Here 's the cookie, Mistress M'Lerie, I wis feart ye micht think I had ett it."

But Mrs. M'Lerie sank into a chair as if she had neither heard nor seen, and murmured:

"I 'll tell ye a' aboot it in a wee, Mistress Munro, I 'll tell ye a' aboot it in a wee."

XII

JIMSIE

IT was Friday afternoon, and on Friday afternoons Mrs. M'Lerie always cleaned the glass case containing her stuffed birds—that is, cleaned it inside as well as out, for, of course, it received an outward dusting daily along with the other contents of the parlor.

With the utmost care she lifted off the cover—preparatory to conveying it to the kitchen, where it would be washed and polished till it shone as brightly as glass could shine—and, laying it on the table, she took up a small, soft brush, such as barbers use in removing shorn locks from one's poll and neck, and dusted the gay plumage of her birds in

a fashion affectionate and proud. Seeing that the case was practically tight, this part of her weekly task was more a labor of love than one of necessity; for it afforded Mrs. M'Lerie the highest gratification, and she really looked as if she felt she was giving the birds pleasure also. The live canary which she had once possessed had never satisfied her as the inanimates before her, though she had wept when it died from over-attention and blamed herself for neglecting it.

She was engaged in gently brushing the gaudiest inmate of the case, smiling happily as she did so, when a tapping at the outer door startled her.

"Wha can that be?" she asked herself, laying down the brush. "Whit wey dae they no' ring the bell? There 's naebody chaps at ma door but Mistress Munro, and she never comes on Fri-

days. An', furbye, it wisna like her clappin'."

The tapping was repeated.

"Na, it 's no' Mistress Munro. I wunner wha it is. But I suppose I best gang an' see," she muttered a little impatiently, as she left the room with a regretful glance at her birds.

Opening the door, she beheld a small boy, who might have been seven or eight years old, neatly if economically dressed, and the possessor of a plump countenance bearing a charmingly innocent expression. Slight brownish stains at the corners of his mouth might have been excused, so cleanly was his appearance otherwise.

"Wis it you that wis clappin', laddie?" asked Mrs. M'Lerie, her irritation vanishing.

"Ay."

"An' whit micht ye be wantin'?"

"I 'm wantin' ma auntie."

"But I 'm no' yer auntie," she said, smiling kindly.

"I ken yer no' ma auntie."

"An' there 's nae auntie o' yours bides here."

"I ken. Ma auntie bides up the stair, an'—"

"Aw, are you yin o' the wee Blaikies?" Mrs. M'Lerie inquired, thinking of a neighbor who had nephews of that name.

"Naw, I 'm no'! I wudna like to be a Blaikie! Ma auntie bides up the stair, an' I cam' to see her, an'—"

"Whit 's yer auntie's name, dearie?"

"Auntie Mary."

"Ay, but whit 's her ither name?"

"I dinna ken. I gaed up til her hoose, an' there wis naebody there, an' an auld wife said she wis awa', an' I wis to come an' speir if you kent onythin' aboot her, an'—"

"Oh, it 's Miss Colquhoun that 's yer auntie. Fine I ken her—a rale dacent wumman. But did ye no' ken she gaed awa' on Wensday to bide fur twa-three weeks wi' a freen' doon the watter—I canna mind the name o' the place. It wis jist the ither day she wis tellin' me she had nae ludgers, an' it wis chaper bidin' wi' freen's nor in yer ain hoose—a sayin' that 's as true as ony o' Soly-man's—no' that I 'm heedin' aboot leavin' *ma* hame. Na! But a' the same, it 's no' fur me to judge ither folk, an' I 'm—"

"Is ma auntie awa' doon the watter?" interrupted the youngster, anxiety in his voice.

"'Deed, ay! That 's jist whit I 'm tellin' ye. . . . But whit dae they ca' ye, dearie?"

"Jimsie."

"Jimsie whit?"

"Jimsie Danks."

"An' whaur dae ye bide?"

"Twinty-seeven McTurk Street."

"Whaur 's that?"

"It 's on the Sooth-side." The reply was given in a quavering manner.

"Mercy me! That 's a lang road! Hoo did ye get ower here?"

"Ma maw pit me in the caur an' tell't the gaird to pit me oot at the fit o' the street, an' I kent the road efter that. But I—I wisht ma auntie wis hame. Oh! Oh!"

"Dinna greet, dearie," cried Mrs. M'Lerie, deeply touched.

"I 'm no' greetin'!"

"Weel, weel. . . . An' hoo wis ye gaun to get hame again?"

"In the caur. Ma maw gi'ed me a penny, but I—I lost it. . . . I thocht I wud get anither frae ma—ma auntie. She aye gi'es me a penny when I gang to see her."

"An' whaur lost ye yer penny?"

"In a—a—in a—a sweetie shope," said Jimsie, truth suddenly getting the upper hand.

"Aw, ye sudna ha'e spent yer caur penny on sweeties," said Mrs. M'Lerie, gravely. "But weans is jist weans," she added to herself.

"I—I didna mean to spend it on sweeties," he muttered. "But I cudna help it."

"Puir mannie! Ma son John wis jist the same, an' he 's nane the waur o' 't noo. . . . Maybe ye 're hungry," she said abruptly. "Are ye hungry?"

"Ay."

"Weel, jist come ben, an' I 'll gi'e ye a piece, Rubbert."

"I 'm no' Rubbert! I 'm Jimsie," he said indignantly. But, nevertheless, he entered the house willingly.

"'Deed, I 'm vexed fur ca'in' ye Rub-

bert when yer name 's Jimsie," she said apologetically, "but I 'm that bad at mindin' names. I 'm aye confusin' the prophets o' the Auld Testament. . . . Come ben the hoose, Jimsie. . . . See there the parlor, Jimsie. Sit down on thon chair, Jimsie."

Jimsie, remembering his manners, said, "Thenk ye, mistress," and took the chair indicated.

"Wud ye tak' a ham sangwidge or a jeely piece?" inquired his hostess, kindly. "I 've a wee tate ham in the hoose, an' jeely 's jist new-made."

"Ay. I cud tak' a sangwidge an' a jeely piece, mistress."

Mrs. M'Lerie laughed, and went to the kitchen to prepare the feast. On her return she discovered her guest beside the stuffed birds, staring at them with all a boy's curiosity.

"Dinna tich the birds, dearie," she

cried uneasily. "I wudna like them to get hurtit."

"They 're no' leevin'," he remarked, it might be a little contemptuously.

"Weel, they 're no' exac'ly leevin', Wullie, but—"

"I 'm no' Wullie! I 'm—"

"Aw, I intendit fur to say Rubbert. Ye maun excuse me, fur I 'm that bad at—"

"I 'm Jimsie."

"So ye are. I sud ha'e mindit. Aweel, Jimsie, never heed the birds the noo, an' come awa' an' ha'e yer bit sang-widge an' jeely piece. An' here a wee drap mulk fur ye."

With some ceremony she laid a small cloth on the parlor table, and set thereon the meal for the youngster, who was not long in accepting her invitation to fall to.

When the sandwich and most of the

bread and jelly had disappeared, he turned to her and, with his mouth full, observed:

"Whit wey dae ye keep deid birds, mistress?"

"Deid?" exclaimed Mrs. M'Lerie, as if she had received a shock. "They 're no' deid—onywey, they 're jist as guid as leevin' yins, an' they 're faur brawer nor ony I ever seen. Are they no', dearie?"

"They canna cheep."

"Ah, but they cud cheep yinst upon a time. The captain that gi'ed them to me tell't me they wis a' bonny singers when—when they wis fleein' aboot in furrin pairts."

"Whit wey dae they no' sing noo?"

"Aweel, ye see, they 're whit they ca' stuffed birds, an' stuffed birds never sings, ye ken. Did ye never see stuffed birds afore?"

"Naw. Wud they no' cheep if ye wis squeezin' them or jaggin' them wi' preens?"

"Mercy on us! Ye mauna say sic things, Erchie—I mean Jimsie."

"Thon wee bew yin 's got awfu' queer een. Ye can pick them oot an' pit them back, an' it 's nane the waur."

Mrs. M'Lerie nearly fainted with horror, but her visitor evidently thought she was merely surprised at his discovery, for he proceeded to explain his experience during her absence in the kitchen.

"I cudna get the een oot the biggest yin, but I got them oot the wee bew yin as easy as onythin'. The wee bew yin lukit unco funny wantin' it's een. Ye sud try pickin' the een oot the ither yins, mistress. It 's—"

"Whisht, whisht! . . . Oh me, the day!" Mrs. M'Lerie almost rushed to her birds.

"I—I didna mean it," cried Jimsie, rather alarmed. He crammed the last of his jelly piece into his mouth, and followed her.

As far as Mrs. M'Lerie could see, there was no damage done, and as soon as she recovered from her dire fright, she forgave the young innocent, and presented him with a couple of peppermints with which to complete his repast. At the same time she felt she would like to get him out of the house.

"Maybe it 's time ye wis gaun hame noo," she said gently.

"Och, I 'm no' heedin'."

"Weel, I 'll gi'e ye a penny fur the caur, fur ye see I 've to get ready fur ma man comin' hame to his tea."

"I 'm no' heedin' aboot gaun hame, mistress. Ye 're that kind."

"Ay, ay," said his hostess, pleasantly, as she patted his head. "But yer mith-

er 'll be wearyin' fur ye. . . . An' I 'll gi'e ye anither penny to buy sweeties to taste yer gab on the road hame. Whaur 's yer bunnet, dearie? Aw, there it is, on the easy-chair. . . . Jist bide a meenit till I get ye yer tippence. An' dinna tich the birds, dearie."

She hurried from the room, and on her return a couple of minutes later she found the boy sitting demurely on the edge of the horse-hair sofa.

"Here yer tippence," she said, "an' be shair an' gang stracht hame. Dinna buy ower-rich sweeties wi' yer penny; buy baurley-sugar or toffee. . . . Are ye shair ye ken the richt caur?" she asked, as she led him to the door.

"Ay, fine."

"Weel, dicht the jeely aff yer mooth, like a guid laddie, an' tell yer maw that Mistress M'Lerie, wha kens yer auntie, wis rale gled to see ye. . . . Guid-bye,

dearie. . . . Maybe ye wud gi'e us a kiss. . . . Guid-bye, an' dinna get rin ower."

Jimsie allowed his elderly hostess to kiss him, and then, with a hasty farewell, bolted down the stone stair as if he were fleeing from Justice.

"The daurlin'!" sighed Mrs. M'Lerie to herself, as she shut the door and prepared to resume her operations on the birds and their case. She had still about an hour ere it was time to get ready her husband's evening meal.

She entered the parlor, smiled to see the clear plate left by her visitor, and picked up the small brush which she had laid down on his event.

"I 'm glad he didna really hurt ma birds," she thought. "He 's but a wean, an' he didna ken ony better, but I wud ha'e been sair vexed if he had— *Oh!*"

She fairly staggered, for the conven-

tionally rustic perch which had sustained the "wee bew bird" was vacant.

"Ma bird 's awa'!" she cried, peering stupidly about the room, as though the thing had flown of its own accord. And presently the ugly truth dawned upon her. "He 's tooken ma bird! He 's tooken ma bird."

She fled from the parlor, from the house, down the two flights of stairs, through the entry, and into the street, where she stood for nearly five minutes, a helpless, pathetic figure. No sign could she see of the thief. Breathless, and too wretched to be enraged, she ascended to her house again, and there realized that she must have Mrs. Munro's advice and assistance. Presently she set out for her friend's house.

. . . . . .

"If I wis you, Mistress M'Lerie," said Mrs. Munro, boiling with sym-

pathetic wrath, "I wud gang to the polis."

"But wud the polis get back ma bird?"

"The polis wud punish the wee deevil that stole it, onywey."

"Ay, but—"

"An' maybe the detectives wud discover the bird fur ye."

Mrs. M'Lerie shook her head dolefully. "Geordie 'll ha'e pickit oot its een by this time, an' he 'll be squeezin' it an' stickin' preens in it fur to gar it cheep. An' it canna cheep, puir thing!"

"I thocht ye said his name wis Davie."

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. Whitever his name is, he 's awa' wi' ma bird. An' I 'll never see it again, Mistress Munro, I 'll never see it again!"

"Oh, dinna be dooncast, Mistress M'Lerie."

"Ye wud be dooncast yersel' if—"

"Ay, ay. But folk sud aye try fur to bear up in affliction. . . . I 'll jist tak' a walk ower bye wi' ye an' see whit 's to be dune."

"I 'm shair I 'm vexed to trouble ye, Mistress Munro," said Mrs. M'Lerie, as they proceeded to her house. "But I wis near dementit when I seen ma bird wis awa'."

"It wud be a shock to ye, nae doot."

"Ay, it wis a' that—a shock to ma nervous cistern, as the doctor said to Mistress Scott when she fell doon the washin'-hoose steps intil a byne o' sapey watter, an' her cairryin' the baikie fur-bye."

"Ye mean system, Mistress M'Lerie."

"Aweel, it 's a' yin. . . . Ma bird 's awa', onywey, an' I 'll never see it again."

Little more was said until they

reached the parlor, and then at the sight of the deserted perch, Mrs. M'Lerie nearly broke down.

But Mrs. Munro burst out laughing. "Whit 's thon on the ornament on the mantelpiece thonder?" she cried.

"Ma bird, *ma bird,* MA BIRD!" gasped her old friend.

XIII

MRS. DUMPHY CALLS

Mrs. M'Lerie. Gled to see ye, Mistress Dumphy. Come nearer the fire, see. Is 't no' awfu' cauld the day?

Mrs. Dumphy. 'Deed ay, it 's cauld. Ye 're fine an' warm in here, though. Phoo! I think I 'll jist tak' aff ma tippet.

Mrs. M'Lerie. Ay, jist tak' aff yer tippet, Mistress Dumphy, an' ye 'll get the guid o' 't when ye gang ootbye again. Ye 're lukin' rale weel.

Mrs. Dumphy. Aweel, I mauna grummle. Ma hoast 's near aboot better, thenk ye. But it wis awfu' bad on Setterday.

Mrs. M'Lerie. (*Sympathetically.*) D' ye tell me that?

Mrs. Dumphy. Ay. Ma throat wis that kitly an' I hoasted an' hoasted till I thocht I wis by wi' 't.

Mrs. M'Lerie. Sirs, the day! Wis the cauld in yer kist?

Mrs. Dumphy. Na. The doctor said there wis some information aboot ma—ma—ma— 'Deed, I furget whit he ca'ed it. It 's the wee rid wagglin' thing at the back o' yer mooth.

Mrs. M'Lerie. I ken whit ye mean, Mistress Dumphy, though I furget the name o' 't. It 's the wee thing that keeps the meat frae gaun doon the wrang wey. Whit 's this they ca' it noo? . . . I ken fine if I cud jist mind it.

Mrs. Dumphy. I had it on the pint o' ma tongue the noo, but it slippit awa'.

Mrs. M'Lerie. (*Suddenly.*) I ken! It 's yer alluvial ye 're thinkin' o'! Yer alluvial, Mistress Dumphy.

Mrs. Dumphy. Ye 're richt! Aweel, the doctor pentit it wi' some sticky stuff twa-three times, an' it got a wee better, but I cudna stir a fit to the kirk on the Sawbath.

Mrs. M'Lerie. D'ye tell me that? But ye canna be ower carefu' wi' yer alluvial, fur if ye neglec' it, it 'll get that big that it 'll waggle richt doon yer throat an' choke ye. I 'm rale gled ye 're better.

Mrs. Dumphy. Aweel, I 'm gettin' auld, an' I daursay the time 's comin' when I 'll no' get better. Fine I mind hoo ma guidman used to say—

Mrs. M'Lerie. Hoots, toots! Ye 're no' that auld! I 'm thinkin' it 's masel' wha 'll be awa' first. But, losh me! wumman, Ne'erday 's no' the time fur speakin' o' sic melancholical maitters. Ye 'll tak' a bit dram, seein' it 's the New Year.

Mrs. Dumphy. Na, na. Thenk ye a' the same, Mrs. M'Lerie.

Mrs. M'Lerie. (*Rising and going to cupboard.*) Havers! Me an' you 's auld freen's, an' auld freen's maun ha'e a'—

Mrs. Dumphy. (*Raising a black-gloved hand in protest.*) Aw, but I really cudna tak' it.

Mrs. M'Lerie. (*Genially, as she produces decanter and glasses.*) Ach, awa' wi' ye! I 'll jist gi'e ye a wee taste—jist a toothfu'.

Mrs. Dumphy. Weel, jist a toothfu', Mistress M'Lerie, thenk ye kindly. The doctor said I wud be nane the waur o' a taste o' speerits whiles, but fur ma ain pairt— Weel, weel, it 's no' the New Year every day; is it, Mistress M'Lerie?

Mrs. M'Lerie. (*Filling glass.*) 'Deed no.

Mrs. Dumphy. Oh, stope, stope! Jist

the hauf o' that! I doot ye 're gi'ein' me mair nor a toothfu'!

Mrs. M'Lerie. Haud yer tongue! I 'll no' gi'e ye onythin' that 's no' guid fur ye. Ma glesses is extraor'nar' sma' yins, ye ken.

Mrs. Dumphy. Is that so? . . . Ay, thenk ye, I 'll tak' a drappie watter. . . . Ay, ay! Weel, here 's to ye, Mistress M'Lerie. A guid New Year to you an' yer man an' the bairns that 's a' sprung up an' left ye. (*Tastes liquor.*) Ay, ay! I 'm shair I wish ye may be spared fur mony a year, Mistress M'Lerie.

Mrs. M'Lerie. 'Deed, I 'm no' thinkin' o' deein' fur a wee, onywey. (*Raising glass.*) Yer guid health, Mistress Dumphy, an' I wish ye may ha'e nae mair trouble wi' yer alluvial! I wudna say but whit a taste o' speerits wud be guid fur yer alluvial.

Mrs. Dumphy. Weel, ye never can tell. This is vera fine whusky.

Mrs. M'Lerie. Mphm! It 's no' that bad. Ma man aye gets a wee jaur aboot this time o' the year. We 're no' big drinkers, Rubbert an' me, but we aye like a taste fur wur freen's an' wursel's aboot Ne'erday. I mind yin year Rubbert got a dizzen o' clairet instead o' the wee jaur o' whusky, fur we had young yins comin' aboot the hoose, an' leemonade 's mair puff nor pleesure, as ma brither Peter says; but the clairet was gey wersh, an' we never had it i' the hoose again. We jist gi'ed the young yins ginger-beer an' a' the bun they cud eat, an' they liket it fine, I warrant ye! Rubbert said he thocht wur pallets—wur stomachs, ye ken—wisna eddicated up to chice wines, as he ca'ed them; an' my brither Peter—he 's an awfu' blether, Peter—he said there wis sayin's in the

Guid Book ag'in' wine-bibbers, but nane ag'in' them as tuk a taste o' whusky whiles, but no' ower aften. Onyweys, we had nae mair clairet, an' Rubbert jist got the wee jaur o' whusky, the same as yer tastin' noo, Mistress Dumphy. (*Sips a little and softly smacks her tongue against the roof of her mouth.*)

Mrs. Dumphy. An' it 's vera guid whusky, as I said afore, Mistress M'Lerie. (*Sips.*) Ay, ay! It 's *vera* guid whusky. . . . Wud ye believe me, I hivna had speerits in the hoose since ma man dee'd, an' that 's twal' year come Mairch the seeventeenth. I hivna had speerits in the hoose since ma man dee'd —Na! . . . I 'm wrang! . . . There wis speerits efter the funeral. Ay, efter the funeral. . . . But there wisna a drap left when the folk had ga'en awa'. . . . Hech! Sirs, the day! Twal' year come Mairch the seeventeenth. Aw, Mistress

M'Lerie, it 's fine fur you that has yer man wi' ye, an' yer bairns comin' aboot ye whiles.

Mrs. M'Lerie. (*Solemnly.*) 'Deed, ay! Me an' Rubbert has muckle to be thenkfu' fur. (*Cheerfully.*) Never heed, Mistress Dumphy, never you heed. It 'll a' be made up to ye some day! . . . Tak' a wee bit bun. See, there a nice bit.

Mrs. Dumphy. Aw, I cudna, thenk ye a' the same. It 's rale nice bun.

Mrs. M'Lerie. Weel, jist assist yersel'. It 'll no' hurt ye.

Mrs. Dumphy. I 'm kin' o' feart fur the awmonds in 't. Dae ye no' think awmonds an' peel is unco ill to digeest?

Mrs. M'Lerie. (*Laughing.*) No' at Ne'erday, no' at Ne'erday, Mistress Dumphy! They 're Gordon awmonds, an' the peel 's jist the finest oranger an'

cistern, an' a pun' o' the bun wudna hurt a flea.

Mrs. Dumphy. Weel, jist the hauf o' 't,—jist a tate.

Mrs. M'Lerie. Tits, wumman! Tak' up the piece! The speerits 'll keep ye richt. . . . Losh me! yer gless is jist aboot emp'y.

Mrs. Dumphy. Oh, I 've plenty here. I wis jist thinkin' I wudna be able to feenish it, Mistress M'Lerie, beggin' yer paurdon fur sayin' sic a thing.

Mrs. M'Lerie. Oh, ye maun feenish it, or I 'll be unco offendit. Ha! ha! . . . No' really offendit, ye ken. . . . But it 's the vera thing fur folk wi' the dregs o' a cauld hingin' aboot them. Efter a', ye micht conseeder it as meddicine, fur it 's no' a thing ye 're takin' frequentlike. . . . Ay. An' ha'e ye ony word o' yer auld freen' Mistress Jamie-

son—her that gaed to bide at Stra'-bungo?

Mrs. Dumphy. Aw, puir thing, I doot she 's gey faur through. She 's been rale badly since the simmer wi' pains in her back. I doot she 's near by wi' 't. I canna mind the name o' the disease—somethin' like "attic."

Mrs. M'Lerie. Oh, ay. I ken whit ye mean. It 's the asiatic she 's got. I mind the names of maist diseases, fur I yinst had a young doctor fur a ludger. Onywey, he wud ha'e been a doctor if he hadna changed his mind an' gaed awa' fur to be a sojer. He wis a rale nice young man. He wud get me ben to the paurlor when he wis at his tea, an' tell aboot folk gettin' their airms an' legs cut aff. An' he used to tell me furbye o' a' the diseases me an' ma man wud ha'e if we leeved lang enough an' ett saumon an' things oot o' tins. I

wis that vexed when he gaed awa', fur he wis a cheery yin to ha'e in the hoose, an' rale nice an' frank wi' me an' ma man, an'—

Mrs. Dumphy. Ay, ay! But I 'm feart puir Mistress Jamieson 's near by wi' 't.

Mrs. M'Lerie. D'ye tell me that? But—but ye mauna be thinkin' o' sic melancholical maitters the day, wumman! Yer gless is emp'y. Ha'e!

Mrs. Dumphy. Na, na. Thenk ye a' the same.

Mrs. M'Lerie. Hoots! Jist hauf a toothfu'. . . . Na? Aweel, I wadna tak' ony mair masel', but you bein' whit the doctors ca' in the complacent stage o' recovery, I thocht ye micht be the better o' a little extra stimulation, as it were. But try anither bit bun. Here a bit wi' nae awmonds in it. . . . Na? No' a bit bun either? Weel,

weel, ye maun please yersel', Mistress Dumphy.

(*Conversation lapses for a minute.*)

Mrs. Dumphy. (*Mournfully.*) Ay, as I wis sayin', I 'm feart puir Mistress Jamieson 's near by wi' 't. Dearie me! to think o' a' the folk that 's deid wha wis yinst leevin'! A' ma auld freen's is slippin' awa'. D' ye ken? I—I brocht in the New Year a' ma lanesome—a' ma lanesome.

Mrs. M'Lerie. D' ye tell me that? Oh, sirs, that wis a sad job! Whit wey did ye no tak' the caur an' gi'e us a ca'? . . . A' yer lanesome, an' me an' you wis lassies thegither!

(*The conversation breaks once more. Mrs. Dumphy is in tears; Mrs. M'Lerie is on the verge. Presently Mrs. M'Lerie is struck by an idea.*)

Mrs. M'Lerie. (*To herself.*) I wunner whit Rubbert wud dae. I wunner

whit Rubbert wud dae. Rubbert cud never thole Weelyum Dumphy, but that 's an auld story. . . . Rubbert didna want folk on Ne'erday nicht as weel as Hogmanay. Rubbert wantit me an' him to ha'e a wee bit supper thegither, wi'oot ony falderals. . . . But I wunner whit Rubbert wud dae. I wish he wud come in. I dinna want to dae the wrang thing. . . . But Rubbert had aye a guid heart, though he cudna thole Weelyum Dumphy.

Mrs. Dumphy. (*Rising.*) I 'll ha'e to be gaun noo. Whaur did I pit ma tippet?

Mrs. M'Lerie. (*Hastily rousing herself.*) Toots! Whit 's a' yer hurry? Rest ye, rest ye.

Mrs. Dumphy. Na, na. Thenk ye kindly a' the same, but I maun be gaun. Aw, here ma tippet ablow the chair.

Mrs. M'Lerie. (*Aside.*) I wunner

whit Rubbert 'll say. (*Aloud.*) Are ye gaun to some pairty the nicht, Mistress Dumphy?

Mrs. Dumphy. Na, na. I wis jist gaun hame. There 's naebody—

Mrs. M'Lerie. Bide whaur ye are an' tak' a bit supper wi' me an' Rubbert.

Mrs. Dumphy. Aw, I cudna. Thenk ye kindly a' the same, but I really cudna bide.

(*But she does "bide"; and Rubbert, on his return, conceals his disappointment and plays the host to the best of his ability, and to his wife's intense relief.*)

XIV

JOHN MUNRO M'CULLOCH

"AN' this is ma dochter's laddie," continued Mrs. Munro, after she had greeted her old friend. "Come furrit, John, an' say 'Hoo d' ye do?' to Mistress M'Lerie."

The youngster, who had been hanging back in a shy fashion, came forward as he was bidden and mumbled "Hoo d' ye do?" as if he grudged it.

"I 'm rale weel, thenk ye, dearie," Mrs. M'Lerie returned, patting his head kindly. "An' I 'm rale gled to see ye— Whit did ye say his name wis?" she asked, turning to Mrs. Munro.

"Tell Mistress M'Lerie yer name, John," said the latter.

"John," said John.

"John whit?"

"John Munro."

"But that 's no' it a'."

"John Munro M'Culloch," said the boy, staring about the room.

"That 's a fine name," remarked Mrs. M'Lerie pleasantly. "A fine name fur a fine laddie. An' hoo auld are ye?"

John, with his gaze fixed on the case of stuffed birds, appeared not to hear the question, and Mrs. Munro said:

"Tell Mistress M'Lerie hoo auld ye are, laddie."

"Five an' a hauf. Whit funny birds, Granny! Can I get playin' wi' them?"

"Na, na. But ye can get lukin' at them, if ye 're guid," his relative replied.

"'Deed ay!" said the hostess, "he can

get lukin' at them, an' welcome! But maybe he wud like a piece first, Mistress Munro?"

"He disna need a piece. He 's jist had his dinner."

"But weans is aye ready fur a piece, an' I 've some rale nice jeely in the press. . . . Wud ye like a piece, dearie?"

"Fine!" said John, promptly, evading his grandmother's warning glance.

"Ye sud say 'If ye please,'" said the latter severely.

"If ye please," he echoed placidly, still intent on the birds.

Cheerfully Mrs. M'Lerie set about preparing the piece, and when she had given it to him and received his thanks, which were prompted in a loud whisper by Mrs. Munro, she took the chair opposite her friend, saying: "Ye wis wantin' to tell me somethin' parteeclar, wis ye no', Mistress Munro?"

"I wis that," returned Mrs. Munro. "An' I wis gaun to ask a great favor, Mrs. M'Lerie."

"It 's grantit afore ye ask it."

"I 'm shair I 'm greatly obleeged to ye. Well, Mistress M'Lerie, I 'm in a quandary, as it were."

"A whit?"

"A quandary means a kin' o' deefficulty."

"I thocht it wis a beast."

"If it wis a beast, I doot I wudna be here to tell ye aboot it," said Mrs. Munro, smiling.

"I 'm gled ye 're no' in a beast onywey," said her friend half seriously, "fur there wud be sma' chance o' winnin' oot. An' whit 's the deefficulty, Mrs. Munro?"

"I 'll tell ye in as few words as is possible, fur I maun get hame in twa-three meenits. Ye see, ma dochter 's

wi' me the noo, an' she 's awfu' bad wi' the cauld in her heid, but she 's set her he'rt on gettin' John a new bunnet fur the Sawbath, an' she askit me to tak' him doon to Argyle Street an' buy him yin, but I 'm sweirt to leave her an' her baby sae lang in the hoose their lanesomes, an' I wis wunnerin' if ye cud be sae vera obleegin' as to be fashed takin' John doon to Argyle Street an' buyin' him a new bunnet. That 's the great favor I wis referrin' to, Mistress M'Lerie."

"An' as I said afore, it 's grantit," said Mrs. M'Lerie kindly, though she was far from delighted at the thought of undertaking the commission. "Ay, it 's freely grantit, Mistress Munro," she added, "fur I 'm vexed to hear yer dochter 's no' weel. As ye see, I 'm ready fur the road onywey, fur I wis gaun to gi'e puir Mistress Dumphy a

ca'. She 's in a sair melancholical condeetion the noo. But I 'll jist ha'e to gang to see her anither day. But if I 'm gaun to Argyle Street, I 'll pit on ma gloves."

"We micht gang thegither the morn," suggested Mrs. Munro, "an' try an' cheer her up a bit. But she wis aye a wumman o' whit ye micht ca' broodin' habits."

"I doot she wis, puir buddy. . . . An' whit kin' o' a bunnet am I to buy fur— Whit did ye say his name wis?"

"John."

"Weel, whit kin' o' a bunnet am I to buy? Sirs the day! It 's mony a lang year since I bocht a bunnet fur a laddie!"

"Ye 've to get him a Glengarry, an' there the money fur it."

"A Glengarry. I maun try an' mind that."

"Yin the same as he 's got the noo. So ye canna mak' a mistak'. But," continued Mrs. Munro in a whisper, "he 's got an awfu' cravin', as it were, fur a Kilmarnock, an' he 'll likely be tryin' to get ye to buy him yin instead o' the Glengarry."

"But can he no' get a Kilmarnock, if he wants it?" inquired Mrs. M'Lerie.

"His mither thinks it disna become him," said Mrs. Munro. "So jist you never heed him, an' get him a Glengarry. Noo I maun gang. An' I 'm vera greatly obleeged to ye. . . . John Munro M'Culloch!" she cried suddenly, "whit are ye daein' at Mistress M'Lerie's birds?"

"Naethin'," the boy replied.

"I hope ye hivna jeelied the nice gless case. Eh?"

John shook his head violently. "I wis jist lukin' at the birds," he said.

"A' weans taks a fancy to ma birds," said Mrs. M'Lerie with pride.

"Are yer birds real yins?" asked John.

"Ay, they 're real," quickly returned the owner.

John said nothing, but he looked as if he did not believe her.

"Mistress M'Lerie 's gaun to tak' ye to get a braw new Glengarry bunnet," Mrs. Munro said as she carefully wiped his mouth with his handkerchief. "An' ye 'll be a guid laddie an' dae as she bids ye."

"I 'm no' wantin' to gang wi' her," he replied ungraciously.

"Ye wee rascal! ha'e ye nae mainners?" cried Mrs. Munro, with indignation. "Efter Mistress M'Lerie bein' so kin' as to say she wud tak' ye, an' gi'ein' ye a jeely piece furbye! Wud ye insult ma auld freen'?"

The hostess interposed gently, "Och, the wean didna mean onythin' wrang. Did ye, dearie?"

"It wisna *you*—it wis the bunnet," he muttered. "I want a 'marnock."

"But ye 'll gang wi' me," she said softly.

"If he disna gang dooble-quick, I 'll tell his fayther. D' ye hear that, John?" said Mrs. Munro.

"I want a 'marnock, Granny."

"Weel, ye canna get yin. Ye 're ower jimp i' the face fur a Kilmarnock."

"I 'm no'!"

"Tits! Come awa', Mistress M'Lerie, an' we 'll set oot. I 'm vexed fur gi'ein' ye sic a job, but jist you be stric' wi' him, an' it 'll be a' richt. Ye can bring him up to the hoose on yer road hame, an' I 'll ha'e a dish o' tea ready fur ye, though I ken weel

enough I canna produce tea hauf as weel 's yersel'. Mony 's the time I 've said to freen's, 'There 's nae tea like Mistress M'Lerie's!'"

Mrs. M'Lerie accepted the compliment with a smile, and presently the three left the house.

The boy was sulkily silent until he found himself alone with Mrs. M'Lerie in the car, when, with a half-hopeful expression, he looked up in her face.

"Are ye gaun to buy us a 'marnock?"

"Na, na, dearie," she replied regretfully, her black-gloved hand tightening on the little fingers. "Ye see, I maun buy ye whit yer mither wants ye to ha'e. Is that no' richt?"

"Naw."

"Oh— 'Deed, I 've furgot yer name. Whit wis it, noo?"

"I 'll no' tell ye if ye 'll no' buy us a 'marnock."

"That 's no' vera kin' o' ye," she said, feeling foolishly hurt.

"I 'm no' heedin'."

"Aw," she began, and stopped for want of his name. "Ye see," she resumed, almost wishing she had refused Mrs. Munro's request, "ye see, I 've got to dae as I 'm bid as weel as yersel', an' if yer mither says ye 've to get a—a—whit wis the name o' the bunnet?"

"A 'marnock."

"Eh? . . . Ah, ye rogue!" she exclaimed, laughing in spite of herself, "ye mauna try fur to cheat yer auld freen'. I ken ower weel it wisna a Kilmarnock. Whit wis the name o' the ither bunnet?"

"I 'll no' tell ye."

"But I ken it 's the same as the yin ye 've gotten on," she said with a triumphant wag of her head.

"I 'll hide it—I 'll fling it awa'—when we get to the shope!"

"Oh, me the day! Wis there ever sic a wean?" sighed Mrs. M'Lerie, "though ma ain son John wis an unco mis*cheef* in his time. . . . Are ye no' gaun to tell yer name?" she said aloud.

"Naw."

There was silence for several minutes, at the end of which John, with an ingratiating grin, whispered:

"Mistress. Here!"

Bending down her head, Mrs. M'Lerie replied, "Ay, dearie. Whit is it?"

"I 'll tell ye ma name, an' the name o' the bunnet I 've on, an'—an' I 'll tak' anither bunnet the same, if—if—"

"Weel, dearie?"

"If ye 'll gi'e us yin o' yer birds."

"*Whit?*" cried Mrs. M'Lerie so

sharply that the other passengers looked at her.

"Yin o' yer birds," calmly repeated the boy. "I wud like the big rid yin. Eh? Are ye on?"

"Yin o' ma birds," she murmured, half dazed. Recovering herself at last, she said:

"Na, na. I cud never dae that."

"Whit wey? Ye 've got plenty."

But Mrs. M'Lerie only shook her head.

"Aweel, I 'll no' tell ye onythin'," he said, and remained dumb for the rest of the car journey.

Arrived in Argyle Street, they walked some little distance eastward, and then they halted, Mrs. M'Lerie peering up at the sign-board of a large juvenile outfitting establishment.

"Ay, this is the shope Mistress Munro tell't me to try. Come awa',

dearie," she said, turning to look for her charge.

He was standing beside her—bare-headed.

"Whaur 's yer bunnet?" she cried in dismay.

"I 'll no' tell ye," he retorted, ostentatiously opening his jacket.

"Mercy me! Whit am I to dae?"

"If ye want to keep the big rid yin, I 'll tak' the green yin wi' the toorie on its heid," he offered pleasantly.

"D' ye mean ma birds?"

"Ay. The big rid yin 's the best, but—"

"Oh, but I cudna pairt wi' ony o' ma birds. . . . Come awa', like a guid laddie, an' we 'll gang inside the shope. Ye 'll get yer daith o' cauld, wantin' yer bunnet."

But John was gazing toward the street, and suddenly he cried: "See,

Mistress, see! There 's a man wi' birds!"

"Birds? *Ma* birds!" gasped Mrs. M'Lerie, feeling by this time that all dreadful things were possible.

"No' *your* birds," said John rudely. "Hear them cheepin'!"

It was a vendor of penny toys that had attracted the boy's attention, and he was now gazing at them with covetous eyes.

And all at once hope flashed into Mrs. M'Lerie's soul. "Wud ye like yin o' thur?" she asked, pointing to the tray of gorgeously colored feathers.

"Ay, fine!"

"But wud ye tak' it instead o' yin o' *ma* birds?"

John nodded, his eyes glistening.

Within a minute a brilliant thing containing a hideous squeaker was in his hands.

"Noo," said his guardian, plucking up her spirits, "ye 're gaun to tell me—"

"Ma name 's John Munro M'Culloch, an' the bunnet's name 's a Glengarry," he replied, producing the latter from under the back of his jacket.

"Weel, I never! It bates a' hoo weans can think o' things!" sighed Mrs. M'Lerie. Then she started. "Mistress Munro!" she cried.

"Ay, it 's jist me, Mistress M'Lerie. When I got hame, ma dochter had a freen' wi' her wha had come in to speir efter her health an' ha'e a keek at the baby—so I jist tuk the next caur, thinkin' I wud be pretty shair to meet up on ye in the shope. But whit wey are ye no' inside yet?"

Mrs. M'Lerie glanced at the absorbed face of the author of her troubles. To herself she said: "Aweel,

it 's a' yin, fur he 's but a wean''; and to her friend she said as lightly as she could, ''Och, we wis jist ha'ein' a bit luk roon' first.''

''Weel,'' returned Mrs. Munro, ''it 's maybe jist as weel ye didna gang inside afore I cam', fur his mither had kin' o' changed her mind an' thocht he micht get a Kilmarnock, seein' he wis that set on it. . . . Whit 's that ye 've gotten, John?'' she asked her grandson.

'' It 's a bird, Granny. It 's a brawer yin nor ony o' hers, is 't no'?'' said John Munro M'Culloch, with, however, quite a kindly glance towards Mrs. M'Lerie.

XV

MR. M'LERIE'S CONVALESCENCE

"I TELL ye, wumman, I 'm no' gaun to tak' it!" The old man waved away the glass which his wife had patiently held out to him for nearly five minutes.

"Aw, Rubbert, ye micht try an' tak' it," she pleaded; "it 's no' that ill to tak'. See! I 'll taste it masel'," she went on, and took a sip of the nauseous-looking dose. "Come, dearie, an' try an' swallow it."

"Awa' wi' 't! awa' wi' 't!" he cried crossly. "I 've never tiched meddicine yet, an' I 'm no' gaun to begin noo!"

"But it 's fur yer ain guid. It 'll mak' ye better."

"The sicht o' 't 's made me waur a'readies. Pit it doon the jawbox an' be dune wi' 't! I wunner at ye, wumman, fashin' me wi' yer nesty mixture—feech!—an' ma heid that bad." And Mr. M'Lerie lay back in his arm-chair by the kitchen fire, and groaned with exceeding bitterness.

"But it 'll mak' yer heid better, Rubbert," said his wife, gently, as she adjusted the blanket which had slipped from his shoulders. "Noo, dinna let yersel' get cauld."

"Ye 're pitten me intil a perfect stew," he complained, trying to get rid of the blanket.

"Ye maun keep warm. Ye ken the doctor said ye wis to bide in yer bed. I 'm shair I dinna ken whit he 'll say when he comes an' sees ye up."

"Ach! the doctor 's a bletherin' buddy! Na, na, I 'm no' fur it," he

exclaimed, as she once more presented the physic.

"But, Rubbert—"

"I 'm tellin' ye I wudna taste it to please the King."

"But ye micht tak' it to please me," said his wife, with a faint smile.

"Ach, haud yer tongue, Sarah! I 'll be deid shin eneugh wi'oot ony druggist's pooshon."

"Oh, Rubbert!" Mrs. M'Lerie sighed, and placed the glass on the mantelpiece. "Are ye feelin' ony easier?" she asked, after a dull period of silence.

"Naw! I 'm freezin'!"

"Ye sud ha'e kep' the blanket aboot ye," she said, tucking it round his shoulders. "Is yer feet cauld?"

"Ay."

She quickly procured a shawl and wrapped it about his extremities.

"I didna say I wantit to be roastit,"

he grumbled, and kicked away the shawl. "Can I no' get peace?"

"'Deed, Rubbert," she replied sadly, "that 's jist whit I want to gi'e ye—inside as weel as ootside." She glanced at the glass on the mantelpiece, and then at him.

"Ye 're tryin' to dae whit thon daft doctor tell't ye. Weeman 'll dae onythin' a doctor says. I 'm shair I never wantit a doctor in the hoose."

"I—I thocht it wis best fur ye to ha'e the doctor, Rubbert. An' Dr. M'Haffie 's a rale dacent man, an' a kind man furbye."

"He 's a peely-wally auld wife! Dod! but I think whiles he tak's his ain meddicine!"

"Puir man! I doot he 'll need it whiles, fur he tries to dae mair work nor a man 's fit fur."

"Weel, he gets peyed fur 't," muttered Mr. M'Lerie.

"He disna get peyed fur the hauf o' whit he dis," Mrs. M'Lerie rejoined quietly. "An' he 's aye gi'ein' awa' his money to puir folk."

"Hmph!" he ejaculated. "Ye wis aye silly aboot doctors, Sarah. It 's a marvel to me that yer bairns are a' leevin' the day, an' healthy an' happy furbye."

"When ma bairns wis wi' me they aye tuk their meddicine when they needit it," she returned, checking a sigh. "An' I dinna mind their faythers ever advisin' them no' to tak' it. Eh, Rubbert?" A twinkle came in the old eyes, but went out almost immediately.

"Aw ma heid!" he interrupted.

"Is 't bad again?" she cried, anxiously.

"Ay, it 's bad—an' nae wunner!"

"D' ye want to be quate? D' ye want me no' to speak?" she asked.

"Hmph!"

"Weel, dearie, I 'll haud ma tongue.

But—but wud ye no' try an' tak' it noo?" she pleaded, taking the glass from the mantelpiece.

"If ye pit that near me again," he roared, "I 'll fling it in the fire!" Then, with an angry grunt, he closed his eyes.

She set the glass down once more, and drew the back of her toil-worn, wrinkled left hand, with its thin wedding-ring, across her eyes.

"He 's said mair hard words to me thae twa-three days nor ever he said in fower-an'-forty years," she sighed to herself. "He wis aye a commandin' man, but never unjust—never! It 's a sad job gettin' auld."

She sat down opposite him, wiped and put on her spectacles, and made an effort to resume the knitting of a thick gray sock. But the knitting was rather a failure. It was her first experience of her husband as an invalid. He had

reached threescore and ten with a clean bill of health—always a masterful man, but never a querulous one.

And then suddenly he had gone "out of sorts," and Mrs. M'Lerie, in alarm, and on her own responsibility, had called in the doctor, a proceeding which had greatly annoyed the invalid.

"I 'm maybe no' weel, but I 'm no' wantin' to be waur," he informed the man of physic to his face. "Ye can luk at ma tongue an' fin' ma pulse, an' play ony ither ootside jooglin' ye like, but I 'm fur nane o' yer bottles an' peells." After which he went into a tirade against all medical science, till his poor wife was fairly affronted and the doctor was nigh suffocating with suppressed laughter.

"Is he rale bad, Doctor?" whispered Mrs. M'Lerie, trembling with apprehension, as she saw the doctor to the door.

He smiled reassuringly upon her. "Oh, nothing serious, Mrs. M'Lerie. He 'll be all right in a day or two. But don't give him solid food till I see you again, and I 'll send along a bottle which you must persuade him to take. He 's not used to being an invalid, so I expect you 'll have some trouble." And, having mentioned when he would return, Dr. M'Haffie hurried away.

For a time she felt comforted, and bore the patient's ill-natured groans and observations with comparative equanimity; but her confidence in the doctor's verdict gradually failed, and now, after three days of tender, thankless nursing, she had only the prospect of the doctor's visit that night to restrain her from sinking into the depths of despair. She looked at the physic-bottle, scarcely touched and untasted, save by herself; she looked at her drowsing husband, and

tried to believe that he was really bett
than three days ago. And then sh
looked at the clock.

"Mercy me!" she exclaimed, hal
aloud. "It 's time fur his tapioca!
She went over to the fire, opened th
oven door, and took out the pudding
dish.

She had just completed setting th
table for the evening meal, when Mr
M'Lerie opened his eyes, hardly as on
who has been sound asleep, and aske
the time.

"Near sax o'clock, Rubbert. Ha'e y
had a nice bit nap?"

He ignored the question, staring un
kindly at the table.

"See hoo nice an' broon it 's got o
the tap," said his wife, indicating th
pudding.

"Whit is it?"

"Tapioca—jist a bewtifu' dish o' tap

ioca, dearie. I 'm shair I never got it to come as nice an' broon on the tap afore."

"I 'm no' heedin' whether it 's broon or green or rid or bew—ay, or tartan—on the tap; I 'm no' fur it. I 'm fair seeck o' yer sago an' tapioca trash! Awa' wi' 't!"

"But, Rubbert, it 's whit the doctor ordered."

"I 'm no' heedin'! I 'm fur nae mair o' yer—yer hen's meat. Ay, that 's the woord fur 't—hen's meat! . . . An' me starvin'," he added, with a groan.

"Are ye hungry?" she asked, the least thing coldly. She could not immediately wholly forgive the insult to her carefully prepared pudding.

"Ay, I 'm hungry."

"That 's a guid sign," she remarked more cheerfully. "Is yer heid better?"

"A wee thing easier," he admitted

grudgingly. "But I 'm wake fur want o' meat."

"Weel, Rubbert, ye micht try the tapioca that I—"

"I didna say hen's meat. Can ye no' gi'e us a dacent bit toastit cheese, wumman?"

"Toastit cheese! Oh me, the day! The doctor wud tak' ma heid aff if I wis gi'ein' ye toastit cheese. Na, na, ye maun wait a wee afore ye get that."

"It 's nane o' the doctor's business."

"I doot it is. An' it 's ma business to get ye weel again. I 'm gled ye 're a wee thing better the nicht, but I 'm no' wantin' ye to ha 'e whit they ca' a collapse."

"I askit fur toastit cheese—no' fur a collapse. I ken what I can eat fine."

"Och, Rubbert," pleaded Mrs. M'Lerie, "ye ken it 's a' fur yer ain guid.

I dinna want to refuse ye onythin' that wud please ye, but—"

"Am I to get a bit toastit cheese?"

His wife shook her head. "Come awa', noo, an' try the nice tapioca afore it gets cauld. Doctor M'Haffie 'll be here at hauf-past seeven, an' we 'll speir at him when he thinks ye can get toastit cheese. Ye see, Rubbert, yer inside 's no' ready fur it yet."

"Ma inside 's ma ain, an' I ken best whit it 's ready fur," retorted the old man, sulkily. "I wud ha'e been better afore noo if it hadna been fur a' the hen's meat I 've ett. . . . Na, na; ye needna bring me that plate. I 'll no' tich it." He groaned and lay back as if to slumber.

Mrs. M'Lerie, half distracted, made one more effort. "If ye wis takin' a wee taste tapioca an'—an'—an' the meddicine, ye micht be that muckle bet-

ter when the doctor comes that he wud let ye ha'e a bit toastit cheese some day shin. Eh, Rubbert?"

But he paid no attention.

"Sirs, the day!" she sighed to herself. "Whit am I to dae wi' him? I 'm thinkin' he 's maybe a wee thing better the nicht, but he 's needin' saft nourishment, an' he 'll no' tak' it. . . . Dearie me! An' he ca'ed ma bewtifu' tapioca hen's meat—hen's meat! An' the doctor 'll be that vexed wi' me fur no' gettin' him to tak' his meddicine. . . . Whit am I to dae wi' him?"

It was only six o'clock, and an hour and a half, perhaps more, must pass ere the doctor would appear. She replaced the pudding in the oven, for she could not bring herself to eat alone.

"Wad ye like a dish o' tea, Rubbert?" she inquired softly.

But there was no response.

"I canna thole it ony longer," she thought. "I 'll awa' oot an' see if I can get Doctor M'Haffie to come the noo, an' see whit 's to be dune. Rubbert 'll no' come to ony hairm his lanesome." She put on a shawl, and after a last look at the old man, set out for the doctor's house, which, fortunately, was in the next street.

Doctor M'Haffie had just settled down to his tea, but he rose at once and accompanied the troubled old woman, talking cheerfully to her by the way.

His visit lasted barely five minutes, and when Mrs. M'Lerie and he went together to the stair-head, he was smiling broadly.

"Is he really better?" she asked.

"He 's nearly all right. A good constitution is better than much physic."

Overjoyed, she asked another question, which caused the doctor such

merriment that he could hardly reply to it.

On her return to the kitchen, Mr. M'Lerie sat up in his chair. "I tell't ye I wis better, Sarah! Did he say I wis to get the toastit cheese?"

"Na; no' the nicht, Rubbert. But he said ye cud get a wee chope if ye wis wantin' it."

"A wee chope? H'm! Weel, that 's better nor hen's meat, onywey. Ay, I 'll tak' a chope—no' an awfu' wee yin, ye ken."

Mrs. M'Lerie almost flew to the butcher's, and less than half an hour later the chop was before her husband.

"Dod, Sarah, but that 's guid!" he said, as he mopped up the gravy with a chunk of bread. It was not till he had finished that he noticed she had eaten nothing.

"Ye maun ha'e yer supper, wum-

man," he said, looking genuinely distressed.

"I 'm gaun to ha'e the tapioca," she returned, going over to the oven.

"Na, na!" he cried excitedly, "ye maun ha'e somethin' else. Ye 'll be ower hungry fur tapioca. Here, Sarah, here! Never heed—"

But Mrs. M'Lerie was gazing in amazement at the pudding-dish, which did not contain a vestige of tapioca.

Her husband's face was fiery, and he looked like a child taken in a fault. "Aw, Sarah!" he murmured foolishly.

But Sarah had dropped into a chair, and, with the dish in her lap, was rocking to and fro in a paroxysm of laughter.

"Aw, Sarah, I cudna—I cudna help it," he stammered.

"Ye—ye 've left me the m-meddicine, onywey," she cried, and laughed again.

But soon she saw that her partner of nearly half a century was shamefaced and miserable. She rose, put the dish aside, and brought down his pipe and tobacco from the mantelpiece.

"Ye 'll be wantin' yer smoke noo, Rubbert. . . . I 'm rale gled ye 're better."

Perhaps it was because of his failing sight that he took her hand along with the pipe and tobacco.

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